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Where does the
Slender-billed
Curlew nest?

Breeding parrots
in Britain

Evolutionary
relationships of
stonechats



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Whither the Observatories?

Dick Loxton

The British Bird Observatories essentially date from the re-establishment of an Observatory on Skokholm in 1946 and on Fair Isle in 1948. Thereafter, during the 1950s and early 1960s, the majority of the Observatories in the present network were established. Sadly, a few have since dropped out, for instance those on the Isles of Scilly and on Lundy. In 1976, the ringing programme on Skokholm was curtailed, but there, and on Skomer from 1960, a daily census has been maintained using the same protocols as at the other Observatories. These two islands, although not now accredited Observatories, maintain links with the Bird Observatories Council (BOC), and their data have been available for studies undertaken by the BOC in recent years. The Observatories were set up at a time when great interest was taken in the study

of migration, and during the early years they were an important part of the BTO's activities. The BOC was formed in 1970, as a forum for discussion between Observatories and the BTO and to undertake research projects. Many individuals destined for a distinguished career in ornithology started their working lives as wardens or assistants at an Observatory, and one of the major contributions of the Observatories in this early period was the compilation of the BTO booklet *Seasonal Movements of Summer Migrants* (Riddiford & Findley 1981), which is still widely referred to in the forthcoming Migration Atlas (Wernham *et al.*, in press). Latterly, however, as the BTO became much more deeply involved with population monitoring, the role of the Observatories in scientific ornithology became sidelined. A senior member of the BTO's staff once remarked to



David Tipling/Windrush

205. Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 2001.

me that the advent of the mistnet had some part to play in this. Ringing trainers had once preferred to take their pupils to the Observatories, where the presence of standing traps enabled a variety of species to be caught, but once the use of mistnets became widespread this could be done at the ringer's own sites.

By the mid 1980s, an independent observer at a BOC gathering could have been forgiven for thinking that the Observatories were almost defunct as a body involved in serious ornithology. But the establishment of a new Observatory on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, in 1985, together with the advent of the personal computer, slowly began to give a renewed role to the BOC and a reinvigorated purpose to the work at the Observatories. In particular, North Ronaldsay Wardens Kevin Woodbridge and Alison Duncan made us all aware of the possibilities of using our data. It must be recognised that individual Observatories are entirely dependent on their own efforts to find the means of employing staff and maintaining their premises. Although some have support from other bodies, and one or two have benefited from bequests from members, most can only continue by taking visitors. I know, from personal experience as Secretary of Bardsey Observatory, just how difficult it can be to obtain sufficient funding; I can well remember telephoning our Treasurer one February to find out if we had enough money to pay the staff wages for the first month of the season. The Observatories only exist because of the devoted efforts and generosity of their members, and mere survival has often absorbed their energies. It is a wonder that many have managed to continue the basic work of ringing and maintaining the daily census, but thank goodness they have, since these data are now being recognised to be valuable as an historical and continuing resource.

In this period of renewal, one of the first co-operative ventures undertaken was to have a stall at the British Birdwatching Fair, at Rutland Water, and our Secretary, Peter Howlett, has organised this and manned our stall with helpers for the last seven years. The renewed vigour also led us to question our role and the reasons for our existence. At a meeting at Gibraltar Point in 1999, a whole day was devoted to producing the following statement, which we feel covers the aims and objectives of both the Observatories and the BOC:

The Bird Observatories' primary purpose is to conduct long-term monitoring of bird populations and migration.

- Individual Observatories are located at prime migration points, where a daily census is taken and other standardised methods of data collection are used in a defined recording area.
- An integral part of Observatory work is bird ringing, undertaken within the national scheme which is licensed under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and co-ordinated by the BTO. This provides data for guiding conservation policies of such bodies as English Nature, the Countryside Council for Wales, Scottish Natural Heritage and their counterparts in Ireland.
- The Observatories enable and encourage volunteers to participate in scientific studies of birds and the environment. The results of these studies and more general information are made freely available to researchers, and to the public, who are welcome to visit Observatories.
- The work of Bird Observatories is co-ordinated and promoted at a national level by the Bird Observatories Council, to which individual Observatories are accredited when they meet specified criteria relating to activities and facilities.

Kevin Woodbridge took the chair of the BOC in 1994, and encouraged all the Observatories to become computerised, and to deposit their historical data on a central electronic database. It soon became clear that this was no small undertaking, and that several Observatories were unable to do this. We needed, therefore, to find money, and we estimated that such an exercise would require in the region of £100,000. To get support for such a project, we needed to establish the value of the data. To do this, we looked at eight species, over a ten-year period, that had shown distinct trends in the BTO's population monitoring programme. Our data, which we refer to as 'BOC indices', showed significant trends, mostly in agreement with those of the BTO's population indices. This approach was stimulated by Canadian and Swedish work, where good agreement had been shown between counts of migrating birds and the monitoring of breeding bird populations (Dunn & Hussell 1995). Our results were pre-

Robin Chittenden



206. Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*, Rockland Broad, Norfolk, May 2002.

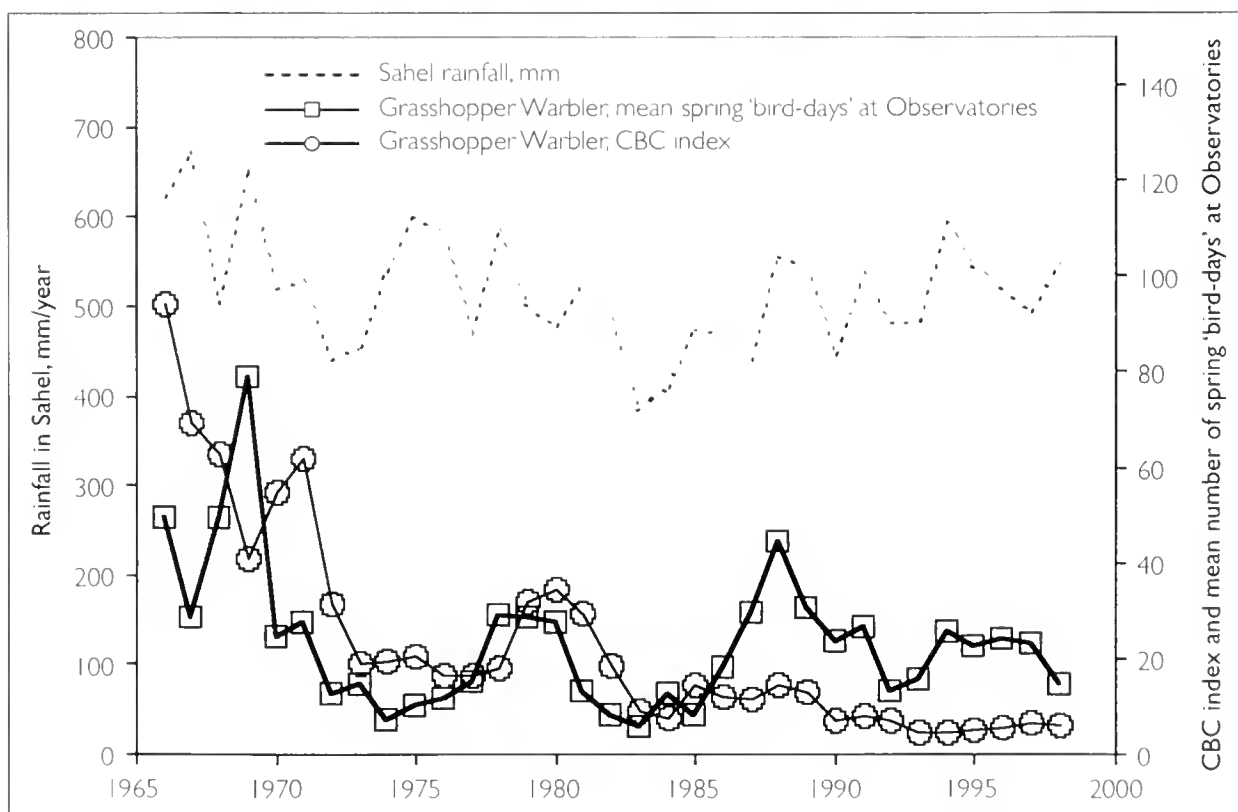


Fig. 1. Mean number of spring 'bird-days' at Observatories and Common Birds Census index for Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*, compared with yearly Sahel rainfall (after Loxton 2001). The numbers of Grasshopper Warblers migrating through Observatory sites in spring is positively correlated with rainfall in the Sahel ($r = 0.509$, $p < 0.005$); so, also, is the CBC index ($r = 0.420$, $p < 0.02$).

sented to a Ringers' Conference and, after some initial scepticism from BTO staff about the value of this data for population monitoring, a one-day meeting was held at BTO headquarters in Thetford. The meeting involved several BTO staff plus Andrew Gosler of Oxford University,

Tim Sparks of the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, and Kevin Woodbridge, Alison Duncan and myself on behalf of the BOC. Following much discussion, it was agreed that the BTO would support an application for funding.

As an example of the potential value of daily

census data, fig. 1 shows Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* counts expressed as the mean of the total spring 'bird-days' at 11 Observatories, plotted with the BTO's Common Birds Census (CBC) index for this species and average annual rainfall in the Sahel. This follows on from Riddiford (1983), where the marked decrease in the numbers of Grasshopper Warblers recorded at Observatories was noted in the early 1970s. What little data exist from ringing recoveries and sightings suggest that Grasshopper Warblers winter in similar areas to Sedge Warblers *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* in West Africa (Rumsey, in press). For Sedge Warblers, it has been shown that the CBC index and winter survival are closely correlated with rainfall in the Sahel (Peach *et al.* 1991), and it is now generally considered that population fluctuations in those British species which winter in this area are probably strongly influenced by environmental conditions there. Fig. 1 indicates that fluctuations in the spring numbers of Grasshopper Warblers migrating through the Observatories are strongly correlated with rainfall in the Sahel, as is the CBC index. The species has, however, occurred on so few CBC sites since 1987 that a realistic annual index for recent years cannot be calculated from those data (Marchant *et al.* 1990), and it occurs on less than 3% of the squares in the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS). The strongly declining CBC trend suggests that this species deserves high conservation concern, even though it is currently only Amber-listed, as a consequence of the contraction of its breeding range. Reasonable numbers of Grasshopper Warblers are still recorded at the Observatories, especially those on the west coast of Britain, and it may be possible to augment the BBS monitoring using BOC data.

Recently, the RSPB has used data from the west coast Observatories as confirmatory evidence of a serious decline in the Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus* as a breeding bird in Britain in the last 12 years (RSPB, in prep.). In 2001, the BOC obtained a grant of £1,000 from the BOU, as part of their UK Biodiversity Action Plan, for us to examine our data on four species: Corn Crake *Crex crex*, Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*, Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* and Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*. These data have been extracted from all the Observatories' logbooks and the writing up is in progress. In the course of this work, the BOC were approached by

Stephen Browne of the Game Conservancy, who had shown that Turtle Doves were no longer making as many nesting attempts as in the 1960s (Browne & Aebischer 2001). He had postulated that the species might be leaving Britain earlier in the autumn, and the only data available to test this hypothesis were those held by the Observatories. Once the data had been analysed, he was able to show convincingly that, in the last 40 years, the species has been migrating south progressively earlier and is now leaving Britain between one and two weeks earlier than in the 1960s. These data were presented at the BTO Conference in December 2001.

In the 1990s, the widespread recognition of the possibility of long-term climate change stimulated a reawakening of the neglected field of phenology. Tim Sparks, in the course of collecting data on a variety of organisms, contacted BOC about our data with a view to examining trends in the first arrival dates of spring migrants. The first arrival date of the Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* at four Observatories was one of 34 indicators of global warming used in a Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions publication (Cannell *et al.* 1999). There is a significant negative correlation between mean arrival date of Barn Swallows and mean spring temperature (fig. 2). The relationship suggests that a 1°C increase in spring temperature is associated with Barn Swallows arriving in Britain two or three days earlier in spring. Loxton & Sparks (1999) have also examined the arrival dates for all the spring migrants at four western Observatories (Portland, Skokholm, Bardsey and Calf of Man). It was found that small migrants which appear in the first half of the migration period were appearing significantly earlier, and a significant correlation of these species' arrival dates with average spring temperatures was evident. Those species that arrive later in the spring do not appear to be significantly affected by spring temperature. Of course, the first individual in spring may not be representative of the biologically-more-important mean arrival date of the population. This has, however, been examined by Roberts (2000), who discovered a good agreement among the trends in first arrival date, later migrants and 50% of the recorded passage birds.

These examples show the importance of Observatory data for ornithological research and the absolute necessity to have all the histor-

Robin Chittenden



207. Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, Lundy, Devon, June 1990.

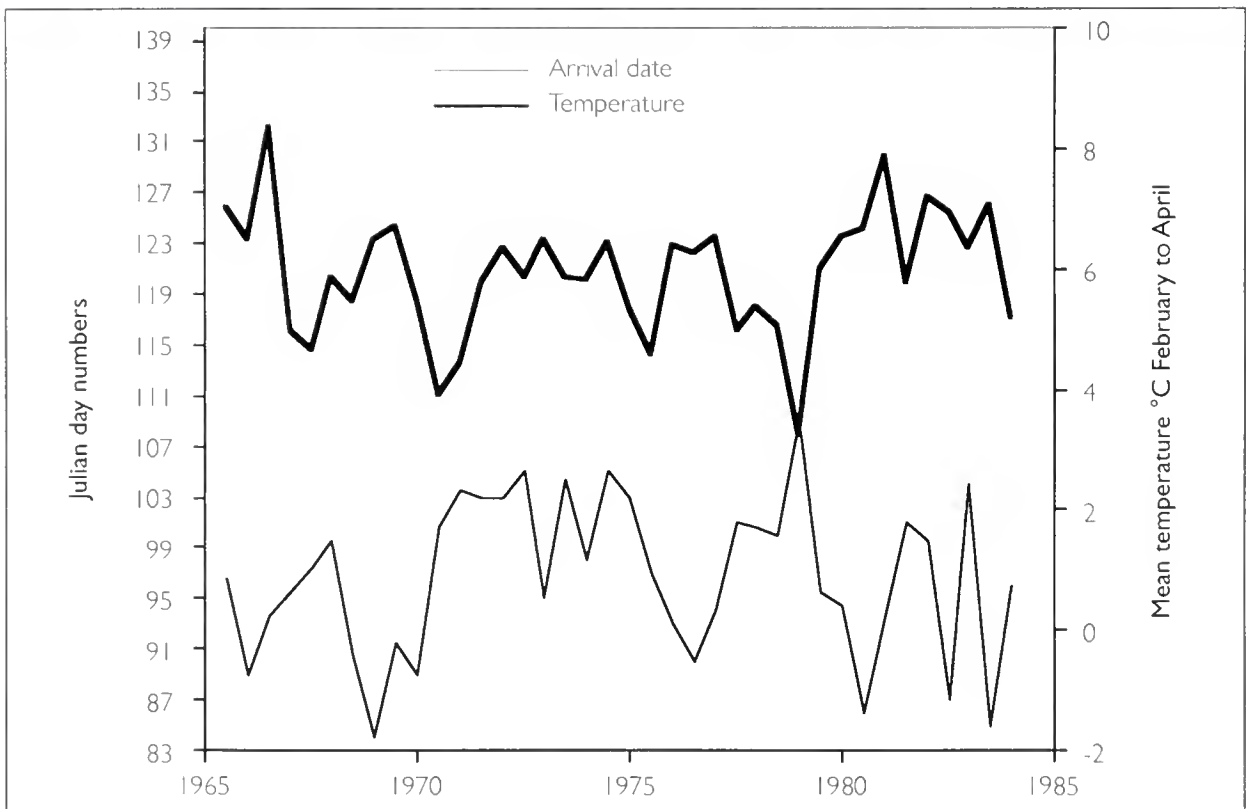


Fig. 2. Date when the first Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* was seen at coastal Observatories in Britain (averaged for Dungeness, Portland, Bardsey and Calf of Man), shown in relation to mean temperatures in February to April in central England (Sparks & Loxton 1999). Julian day numbers are days after 1st January, such that 83 is 24th March. There is a significant negative correlation between mean arrival date of Barn Swallows and mean spring temperature ($r = -0.478$, $p < 0.001$), i.e. swallows arrive earlier in warm springs, and vice versa.

ical data easily available for research workers. So far, progress in getting these data computerised has been slow. This is perhaps inevitable in a dispersed organisation which is wholly dependent on voluntary effort, but our application for funding is close to being finalised, and we can look forward to rapid progress to the day when all our data will be readily available.

As well as daily census data, the BOC has been involved with other matters. Five of the Observatories manned ringing sites in the European Songbird Project, co-ordinated by Franz Bairlein, and continue to collect data according to the protocols of this scheme. This scheme provided an opportunity for ringers and staff from the Observatories to attend

workshops aimed at standardising the taking of biometric data. Following on from this, the BOC has discussed how we might contribute personnel to West African studies, and we have drawn the attention of the BTO and Franz Bairlein to the resources available from skilled Observatory staff in the winter season.

The BOC is also involved in proposals which would make ringing training acceptable to the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ/SVQ) system. The potential for this system to give young people experience of Observatory life, with its associated possibilities of engendering an interest in nature, conservation or ringing, would be of great benefit to both the Observatories and other conservation organisations. With a recognised qualification, funding could also be released from educational budgets to support staff at Observatories in developing this role, which would be an extension of the Observatories' long-held role in helping train ringers through the use of dedicated courses. The present age structure of ringers does not bode well for the future manning of Observatories, and clearly we need to encourage young people to enter the scheme, and to educate the public about the importance of ringing as an ornithological tool.

Individual Observatories have made significant advances in recent years, with refurbishment at Portland, Dungeness and Fair Isle, and complete renovation at Sandwich Bay. All the Observatories maintain close connections with local birders and publish annual reports, often carrying important articles on local fauna and flora besides birds, particularly moths and butterflies (Lepidoptera). The Bardsey report, for example, is a listed, though not refereed, scientific journal and has carried papers concerned with data from all the Observatories. Bardsey has also produced a Ringing Atlas for their recoveries and controls (Loxton, Kittle & Hope Jones 1999). Welcome news in recent years has been the reactivation and reaccreditation of Holme, in Norfolk, and the establishment of two new Observatories at Filey and Flamborough, in Yorkshire. There is also the possibility of two new Observatories in Scotland.

So, with an expanding network of Observatories, and a new awareness of the importance of our data, the future looks brighter than many

may realise. To me, it is particularly encouraging to see the growing interest of the BTO, RSPB and CEH in our work. The advent of the BTO's 'Migration Watch' website should bring us back to the forefront of migration studies. It is now up to us to realise our ambition of establishing our great collection of census data onto a single, networked database. As an academic once observed to me, 'If you only had your data available, I'd put two PhD students to work on it at once!' That must be our future.

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Where does the Slender-billed Curlew nest, and what future does it have?

Adam Gretton, Alexander K. Yurlov and Gerard C. Boere



ABSTRACT This paper reviews and includes passages from the only fully documented accounts of nesting Slender-billed Curlews *Numenius tenuirostris*, by Valentin Ushakov of Tara, southwest Siberia, between 1909 and 1925.

It then summarises some of the more recent search efforts, before considering the likelihood of the current nesting grounds being found. Unless greatly increased efforts are made, the species appears to be heading inexorably for extinction.

With a feeling of deep satisfaction, I watched the magical picture [of 14 Slender-billed Curlew nests] and felt very happy, having discovered a new page in the great book of nature. Many fellow ornithologists would give a lot to observe this picture, but I, a humble and ordinary nature-lover, got this chance for free.

I warmly thank fate for giving me such inexpressible pleasure and satisfaction.

Slowly the sunset was fading, the curlews calmed down; the females sat on nests and the males landed nearby. The calls of the day birds quietened. A Bittern started booming more loudly and from above a Jack Snipe called melodically. The quiet warm spring night began. (Ushakov 1925)

The Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* is the rarest bird in Europe, and the only bird species in the Western Palearctic for which the *current* breeding grounds are unknown. The first-summer Slender-billed Curlew at Druridge Bay, Northumberland, in May 1998, generated a huge amount of interest (e.g. Cleeves 2002; Steele & Vangeluwe 2002), and the assertion was widely made elsewhere that the breeding grounds of this species have never been found. This is not the case, but we need to go back almost a century to the successful 15-year quest of V. E. Ushakov, spanning the years before and after the Russian Revolution. Ushakov's work culminated in the discovery of a colony of 14 nests in 1924, south of Tara in Omsk region. It would have been difficult, if not impossible, for Western ornithologists to visit this area for more than 60 years following this encounter, until the era of Gorbachev and *glasnost*.

One of us (AG) was lucky enough to visit southwest Siberia in 1989, 1990 and 1994, while working on the Slender-billed Curlew for ICBP (now BirdLife International). In each year, AG (together with John O'Sullivan in 1990) joined AKY and colleagues in searching potential nesting areas, including 'Ushakov's marsh' at Krasnoperovaya ('red feather'), south of Tara (plate 212). In almost every other year since 1989, AKY has searched for the species, sometimes with GCB, supported by the Dutch Government, RSPB and BirdLife International. To date, the search has not been successful, but has produced many other collaborative benefits, not solely ornithological.

In conservation terms, the most significant aspect of the Druridge Bay record was that the bird was a first-year. We know, therefore, that in 1997 the species nested *somewhere*; finding where would be perhaps the greatest prize in Palearctic field ornithology, and one that AKY will continue to seek. It also may well hold the key to the survival of the species.

Ushakov's successful quest, 1909-24

Although there have been claims from a wide range of areas, the only fully documented and convincing records of nesting Slender-billed Curlew are contained in four remarkable papers by V. E. Ushakov (1909, 1912, 1916 and 1925). A full translation of the 1916 paper was published in Gretton (1991), but not the others, as they were not then available. It seems worthwhile, therefore, to quote relevant passages from the other papers. This article has used only the key sections from each paper, but the original papers and full translations have been deposited in the Alexander Library of the Edward Grey Institute, at the University of Oxford.

Ushakov's first paper appeared in 1909 in a hunting journal; parts of it were reproduced in translation in Dresser (1910), having been provided by S. A. Buturlin, an eminent Russian ornithologist. Ushakov was living in Tara and appeared quite familiar with the species, having already found several nests. His account is a mixture of his own observations and those of local hunters. In the following accounts, present-day vernacular and scientific names are used, and dates have been adjusted to their modern equivalents (the Russian calendar before 1917 was 13 days behind the modern calendar).

'Around Tara, the Slender-billed Curlew is quite common, though not seen everywhere. All three species of curlew [i.e. Eurasian Curlew *N. arquata*, Slender-billed Curlew and Whimbrel *N. phaeopus*] are common on the big marshes at Krasnoperovaya, 13 km SSW of Tara. The preferred habitat of the Slender-billed Curlew is open marshes, or with some birch *Betula*, but it can sometimes be seen on marshy areas next to pine *Pinus* forests. In spring it arrives about a week later than Eurasian Curlew, not being seen before 10th May.

'On 12th May [year unspecified, but likely to be 1908] I was sitting in a small duck-shooting hide on the edge of Krilishkov Lake, with dusk

Adam Gretton



209. Taiga habitats, taken during a helicopter flight from Severnoye, Russia, June 1990.

approaching. Above me I heard the clear melodic call of the Slender-billed Curlew, and saw a flock of eight birds descending from high on to the marshy edge of the lake. They kept in pairs and very quickly dispersed around the lake, probing in the soil for food. I shot and killed one. The rest flew further into the marsh, calling, but one, apparently the shot bird's mate,

flew around with pitiful cries. On all other occasions I only saw single pairs of Slender-billed Curlew, apparently already paired on arrival.

'Regarding Slender-billed Curlew nests, they are almost always in the middle of the marsh, on grassy hillocks or small dry islands, 10-15 m². I have always found single nests (quite often with Eurasian Curlews very close by) but local hunters tell me they have seen tens of nests in a small area.

'The nest is made in a shallow hollow, with a little dried grass. Complete clutches of four eggs have been found from 30th May to 11th June. I cannot give the exact egg sizes, as the eggs were prepared in the wrong way, with two holes, but the length varied from 52.5-54.5 mm, and width from 38.0-40.1 mm.

'After the young fledge, in early July, the birds stay around the nesting area for quite a long time, then wander more widely around the marsh. In early August, one can quite often see family groups of 5-6 birds, in meadows where they are not seen in spring. They become less obvious, and have never been seen leaving, but probably go in the second half of August.

'In the future, if my health and circumstances allow, I hope to record more details of this little-known bird and collect the downy chicks.'

(Ushakov 1909)

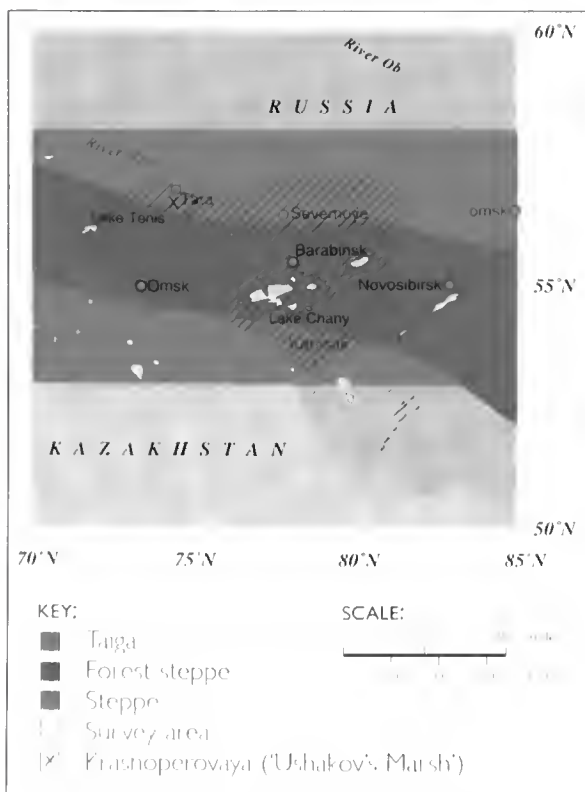


Fig. 1. Map of southwest Siberia showing the area of Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* searches, 1989-1997.

From the perspective of recent Cold War history, it may come as a surprise that there was some Anglo-Russian ornithological collabora-



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210. Aerial view of typical forest-steppe habitat, northwest of Novosibirsk, Russia, June 1990.

tion prior to the Russian Revolution. Dresser (1910) concludes his Slender-billed Curlew account by referring to an egg apparently taken by P. A. Schastovski on the edge of Lake Chany on 20th May 1909. This egg was exhibited by Dresser at a meeting of the British Ornithologists' Club on 15th December 1909 (Jourdain 1919). It is possible that Jourdain confused this egg with one collected by Ushakov (see below), because Schastovski's egg was recorded by Dresser as being in Tomsk Museum. Alternatively, Dresser may simply have been loaned the egg for use in his book's plate, and then returned it to Siberia.

Ushakov (1925) claims to have given Dresser a single Slender-billed Curlew egg in 1909 (in exchange for several other rare eggs worth 30 roubles). This egg is apparently different to that collected by Schastovski, as both are shown separately in the plate in Dresser (1910). Ushakov's egg (collected on 2nd June 1909) is still in the Dresser collection in the Manchester Museum (*Brit. Birds* 95: 359-360).

In 1909 or 1910 (probably the latter), Ushakov met the English ornithologist Potter at Tara, before leaving on a steamboat on the River Irtysh, and sold him a clutch of four Slender-billed Curlew eggs for 35 roubles. Ushakov (1925) refers to Potter learning of nesting Slender-billed Curlews from his (translated) articles appearing in *Ibis*. Careful searches in the Alexander Library by Mike Wilson have revealed no such articles, although it is possible

that others may have quoted extracts, as Dresser did. It would appear most likely that Potter either attended the BOC meeting in December 1909, or had seen an early copy of Dresser (1910), and then left for Siberia not long after.

Ushakov was surprised at the level of interest that his 1909 paper generated and had difficulty answering all the resulting enquiries. In his next paper, in July 1912, he says that he had not been able to visit the nesting areas, and was only aware of one nest being collected (by a peasant) since 1909. The villagers all agreed that Slender-billed Curlew numbers were decreasing each year. At the game market, Ushakov found only one Slender-billed Curlew for every hundred Eurasian Curlew.

'It became clear that the Slender-billed Curlew was either extremely shy and cautious, or it has changed its breeding area and might even have disappeared from our region. This made me pay special attention to the species this spring. A complicated situation, caused by very poor crops in our region, did not allow me to implement my plans fully; however, I managed to spend a whole day searching for the species.

'On May 22nd my friend V. S. Stolbov went hunting to Shkitovski Lake, 4.25 km away from Osinovski Vyselek village, and was fortunate to find a couple of Slender-billed Curlew and to shoot one male. From the behaviour of the birds, he got the impression that they were intending to breed somewhere in this area.

Chris Gomersall



211. Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*, Morocco, February 1995.

'Finally, on June 3rd, Stolbov and I set out to seek the nesting place of the species in the surroundings of Krasnoperovaya and Osinovski Vyselek. By 6 am we were already in the vast wetlands lit by bright sunshine – the aim of our trip.

'A thin surface of peat bog lay in front of us, covering an area of some 2 km². To the north-east we could see Osinovski Vyselek, to the

southwest there was a dense pine forest, and to the south were stands of birch. Most of the marsh was covered by thin vegetation of sedges, horsetails and sparse reeds. There were many scattered plots covered by a thick layer of soft moss. Occasionally one could see long and narrow ridges of drier land covered with dense vegetation. Birches were growing on them and in some places small pine trees.

'As I entered the bog...two Slender-billed Curlews emerged. The calls they produced on mobbing a Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* were completely different from usual curlew calls. They were a sort of hollow vibrating whistle, very similar to that of the Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*. It is hard to describe these calls, but they would sound something like "sirrr-virrr". The mobbing strategy of the Slender-billed Curlew also differed from that of the Eurasian Curlew. The latter would attack the crow rapidly and even peck it with its bill, and I could see it clearly with my Zeiss binoculars. The Slender-billed Curlew, however, did not perform such sudden attacks as its larger relative.

'Then both Slender-billed Curlews ceased mobbing very unexpectedly, and they flew away with a loud and clear call: "be, be, be, be, be, be, be...". The call could be immediately distinguished from that of the Eurasian Curlew, which I described as similar to the neigh of a foal. This call was much louder and higher in pitch...

'The most persistent persecutors [of a



212. Alexander Yurlov at 'Ushakov's marsh', Krasnoperovaya, Russia, June 1994.



Adam Gretton

213. Cemetery at Krasnoperovaya (village deserted in 1960s), Russia, June 1990; former Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* nesting site.

passing Black Kite *Milvus migrans*] were a pair of Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus*, and soon a Slender-billed Curlew joined them. Judging from the distance between this observation point and the previous one, I could assume that this bird was from another breeding pair.

'The marsh, especially the area by the lake, was full of life! Small cloud-like flocks of colourful Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax* were whizzing by and dispersed along the shore in their leks. The air was filled with the neigh and whistling of Eurasian Curlews that were flying from place to place undisturbed.

'Occasionally in the distance the trumpets of Common Cranes *Grus grus* would reach us. Black-throated Divers *Gavia arctica*, called by the local people "gagautch", flew from lake to lake with hollow croaks, and the mournful melodic song of the Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* was in harmony with the whole spirit of the marsh. Everything seemed so pensive and we got into an elegiac mood. There was silence, a light wind was rippling the vast surface of the lake, and the sun shed plentiful rays.

'By 4 pm, hosts of mosquitoes arrived and we, exhausted by our ten-hour wandering through the marshes, hardly reached our horses. So our excursion was not successful, and we have to wait patiently for next spring.' (Ushakov 1912)

Ushakov's next paper was in 1916 (full translation included in Gretton 1991) and describes events in 1914. On 22nd May, a hunter from Krasnoperovaya brought Ushakov a female with nest and eggs, and said he thought there was

another nest close by. Ushakov visited the site, 1 km from Krasnoperovaya, on 29th May and found a nest with four eggs (a photograph of which is included in the 1916 paper, unfortunately not of sufficient quality to be reproduced here). He collected the female and four eggs, which are notably larger than those detailed in the 1909 paper, at 64.0–65.6 mm long by 45.0–47.1 mm wide.

Perhaps not surprisingly in view of the political events of November 1917 (which, incidentally, also curbed Ushakov's collecting instinct; see below), some years passed before Ushakov's next paper, in 1925. This described the finding of a Slender-billed Curlew colony, the culmination of his quest.

'In spring of last year, 20th May 1924, I went in the evening to a lek of Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix*. It was located on one of the numerous islands scattered in a huge peat bog to the south of Tara. Having covered 8.5 km, I was approaching the island with the lek. The sun had not set yet. I could hear the grouse cooing – the lek was at its height. I did not want to scare away the red-browed blackies, and in order to save the lek until dawn, I went to the right of the island and went straight ahead, across the bog, watching the spring life of the feathered-ones.

'The grey monotony of the bog was painted in soft tones by the last rays of the sun disappearing beyond the horizon. Young grass, scattered here and there, appeared as bright, joyful gleams. On the left grew a pine stand of rich dark green, and young birch trees with their

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214. Dalmatian Pelicans *Pelecanus crispus*, Lake Tenis, Omsk region, Russia, June 1994.

leaves half-open glared in sharp contrast with their bright whiteness. There was no wind; the sky was clear and blue. And the air was filled with fragrance of spring.

'Suddenly I noticed a few birds flying towards me. I recognised my old friends the curlews by their flight and silhouettes, and when they came closer and uttered their alarm calls, so different with their hollow vibrating whistle from those of the Eurasian Curlew, there was no doubt left: they were Slender-billed Curlews rushing in front of me, these interesting birds so poorly studied so far. Curlews were protected by law in that season and I had no licence for collecting, so I could not sample any of them. I decided to track them in order to find the nesting site. I went there, where the birds circling over my head had flown from, and more of these birds came to meet me. Soon there were no less than twenty of them.

'Having noticed that the birds were coming from a small upraised plot, I proceeded to this little isle. When I reached it, curlews began to take off around me and I noticed their nests with eggs. I found 14 nests altogether. Some of them were located very close to each other, about 2 m apart, while some of them were 11-13 m apart. The island was some 100 m in length and



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215. Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus* chicks, Lake Tenis, Omsk region, Russia, June 1994.

10 m across, and here on this comparatively small area 14 nests of Slender-billed Curlew were situated. Most of them contained two eggs, two had three eggs and only one had a complete clutch of four eggs, while some of them still had only one.

'The eggs were pear-shaped, with the usual appearance of wader eggs: black, dark brown and red-brown spots, dots and stripes being scattered on the yellowish-green background. [They] varied in shades of colour and spot shape. The eggs also varied in size, as far as could be judged by eye. For instance, the complete clutch of four eggs consisted of large ones comparable in size to the eggs of Eurasian Curlew, while those of the small clutches of one and two were significantly smaller.

'The females were taking off from the nests in silence and flew low without a sound, approaching me very closely. The males rushed around over my head uttering either their characteristic hollow vibrating whistle or loud high-pitched "be-be-be-be...". All the nests were built in shallow hollows on the ground, their construction was rather simple – just a wisp of dry grass. I did not find any animal products such as wool or feathers in the nest-linings.

'After finishing a perfunctory inspection of

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216. Asian Dowitchers *Limnodromus semipalmatus*, Ust-Tarka Zakaznik, Russia, June 1989.

the nests, I walked some distance back in order to be able to watch an interesting and rare picture – the colonial breeding of a bird, characteristic of the Mediterranean zone, and considered by our scientists, outstanding ornithologists, a dying-out species, in the northern zone (sic) of Siberia.' (Ushakov 1925)

Although Ushakov's accounts provide a unique record of nesting Slender-billed Curlews, several outstanding questions remain. All four papers give only specific observations from a single day, and yet the species clearly fascinated Ushakov for the best part of two decades. It is particularly curious that, having fulfilled his ambition of finding a colony (above), he did not make further observations in the following days, and makes no reference to any particular constraints preventing his return.

There is considerable variation in the egg sizes given above, as noted by Jourdain (1919) and by Ushakov himself in his observations at the colony. Given that the two species nested so close to each other (Ushakov 1909), one may wonder whether some of the eggs he saw in 1924, and perhaps some of those collected earlier, were, in fact, from Eurasian Curlews. Any additional papers by Ushakov might provide further valuable information. He is thought (by AKY) to have written some 73 papers in total, but none of the others are thought to refer to Slender-billed Curlew.

More recent searches, 1989-1997

AKY has carried out fieldwork in southwest Siberia for almost all his working life, taking a particular interest in studies of waders and gulls. Since the late 1980s, the Slender-billed Curlew has been a priority, but he has never seen the species in Siberia, only in Morocco, in January 1994, during a BirdLife International workshop on the species at Merja Zerga.

It is not possible here to summarise all the Slender-billed Curlew surveys that have been carried out since 1989, but we will briefly summarise four expeditions (1989, 1990, 1994 and 1997). The first three expeditions were of similar format, though some different areas were covered in each year. Some two weeks were spent in the field, covering 2,600-3,200 km (often on poor roads), and spending no more than two or three days at each site. The expedition teams were small, of four or five people including a driver. In 1990, thanks to the Soviet

Academy of Sciences, we had the use of a helicopter for four days, flying from Severnoye, some 300 km northwest of Novosibirsk. This enabled us to reach some of the otherwise inaccessible taiga areas, a vast complex of lakes and marshes stretching hundreds of kilometres (plates 208-210). In 1997, AKY and GCB spent some five weeks in the field, covering 5,000 km and visiting seven of the 22 'target areas' identified by Danilenko *et al.* (1996). Four of these areas had been largely destroyed by overgrazing, drainage and cultivation, but two areas were identified as high priority for future searches (Boere & Yurlov 1998). Until recently, almost all ornithologists in Russia were professionals, and thus most information comes from Biological Stations (e.g. Lake Chany and Karasuk) and professional expeditions, rather than from amateur observers. In recent years, with pressure on scientific funds in Russia, the external support of such expeditions has been essential.

Despite searching many apparently suitable Slender-billed Curlew breeding areas, none was found (to no one's great surprise), but much other information was obtained. Globally threatened species seen (with numbers in each year [1989, 1990, 1994, 1997] in parentheses) were: Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus* (0, 0, 50, 23), Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* (3, 1, 2, 1), Eastern Imperial Eagle *A. heliaca* (0, 3, 0, 0), Corn Crake *Crex crex* (21, 10, 8, 2), Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* (0, 0, 14, 3)



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217. Nest and eggs (full clutch) of Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus*, Novosibirsk region, Russia, June 1989.



218. Post-breeding congregation of Great Black-headed Gulls *Larus ichthyaetus* (with young) and Caspian Terns *Sterna caspia*, Uz Karyetki, Lake Chany, Russia, June 1994.

and Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius* (0, 0, 0, 2). Near-threatened species seen included: White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* (1, 6, 2, 0), Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (1, 4, 0, 0), Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (1, 0, 0, 1) and Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus* (30, 4, 0, 9).

The Dalmatian Pelican colony at Lake Tennis is apparently the most northerly known colony (A. Crivelli *in litt.*); it contained eight active nests on 15th June 1994 (plates 214-215). Those seen in 1997, in the Burla valley, southeast of Lake Chany, were apparently a non-breeding group. Seven new breeding sites of Asian Dowitcher were found (five in 1997); one north of Lake Tennis represents a considerable range extension. A nesting pair of Sociable Lapwings was seen in 1997, near Karasuk, at the very edge of the species' range.

The wetlands of southwest Siberia that we were able to survey were mostly in the relatively narrow forest-steppe zone, between the dry steppes of Kazakhstan to the south and the vast taiga to the north, largely inaccessible in summer, unless by air transport (fig. 1). Krasnoperovaya, near Tara, where Ushakov made his observations, is located towards the northern limit of the forest-steppe zone, with parts of the marsh having some characteristics of the taiga, such as the presence of conifers. An important question is whether this habitat was the typical nesting habitat of the Slender-billed Curlew, or whether its preferred habitat was farther north, in the taiga, or farther south, in more typical forest-steppe, or even true steppe. There has been much speculation on this question (Belik 1994; Van Impe 1995; Danilenko *et al* 1996), but there appears to be no definitive evidence pointing either way. The only fully confirmed and well-documented observations of nesting Slender-billed Curlews are those of

Ushakov at Krasnoperovaya, so that was where we concentrated our attention.

In 1990 and 1994, there were still substantial areas of marsh at Krasnoperovaya, apparently quite similar to that described by Ushakov, though perhaps with rather more trees. In 1990 there were 12 pairs of Eurasian Curlew at the site, but in 1994 only six or seven pairs were seen. Despite our enquiries, no one locally appeared to have seen a small curlew. By 1997, the area had changed dramatically, with higher grassland areas next to the marsh under cultivation, and the marsh itself 'completely covered with young forest' (Boere & Yurlov 1998). In view of the historical importance of the site, it would appear to deserve a higher level of protection. BirdLife International and the Russian Bird Conservation Union have an ongoing programme to identify Important Bird Areas in Siberia. Even without the 'holy grail' of nesting Slender-billed Curlew being located, the wetlands of southwest Siberia are of the utmost importance for their populations of breeding waterbirds (Boere & Yurlov 1998).

Other species of note seen included a mixed colony of Great Black-headed Gulls *Larus ichthyaetus* and Caspian Terns *Sterna caspia* on Uz Karyetki in Lake Chany (plate 218). In 1997, a new colony of Great Black-headed Gulls, with 450-500 pairs, was discovered on a small island in Lake Kulundinskoye. Mixed colonies of Little Gulls *L. minutus* and White-winged Black Terns *Chlidonias leucopterus* were also seen; in 1997 a minimum of 12,000 pairs of the latter species were counted. A nest of Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasii*, with small young, was found at Krasnoperovaya in 1990 (plate 219).

There has been only one recent claimed record of Slender-billed Curlew in west Siberia: an adult bird in flight on 9th July 1996, WNW of Tara (Bojko & Nowak 1996).

Future possibilities: will a nest be found?

Without a tip-off from a modern-day Ushakov, the chances of finding a nesting Slender-billed Curlew in the vastness of the Siberian Plain by ground-searching are decidedly remote – truly the proverbial ‘needle in a haystack’. Another option that has been considered for well over a decade is tracking, either by conventional radio-transmitter, or by a satellite-transmitter. Leaving aside the considerable difficulty of catching a bird to attach any tag, there are other problems, apparently insurmountable at present. Satellite tags, at a minimum weight of 15 g, are still considered too heavy by the Slender-billed Curlew Working Group, while the practicalities of ‘barnstorming’ flights to search for a radio-tagged bird are highly complex. As well as depending on funding, planes, pilots and the availability of landing strips, there is also the major issue of security clearance to fly such search transects. Although there was considerable interest in this approach at the April 2001 meeting of the Working Group in Kiev, it was the latter aspect that was thought most likely (by Russian colleagues) to prevent such a study.

An entirely new approach to the problem is currently being pursued by the RSPB. This involves the use of stable isotope analysis (Hobson 1999), which allows the possible identification of the region in which an individual bird originated by analysing feather samples from museum specimens. If this approach can narrow the search area to one with a radius of, say, 100-200 km then the hunt would be on. If, however, it suggests a search area with a radius of 400-500 km (perhaps covering much of the suitable habitat in southwest Siberia), then the chances of finding the species by ground-searching would still be remote.

If a nest is located, then a whole new set of issues would arise, including that of confidentiality. Unfortunately, the level of interest from the ornithological world could potentially pose

a serious risk; the Slender-billed Curlew Working Group has concluded that any discovery must be kept confidential, but, of course, any necessary conservation measures would be strenuously pursued. In this regard, protocols have been agreed between the Working Group and the Russian Bird Conservation Union, both regarding any discovery, and proposals for further research. An important aspect is that any search efforts should only be made with the full collaboration of the RBCU, and local ornithologists, such as AKY.

What future for the Slender-billed Curlew?

The most important question of all, completely eclipsing whether the species forms part of one particular country’s List, is surely whether the Slender-billed Curlew is doomed to extinction. At present, the signs are not good. In the last 12 years, the average number of records annually has fallen from approximately ten to just two. BirdLife International currently lists the species as critically threatened (the only such species in mainland Europe and one of only three such species in Russia, the others being Crested Shelduck *Tadorna cristata* and Siberian Crane *Grus leucogeranus*), with a probable world population of less than fifty individuals (BirdLife International 2000). For any species, this is a tenuous toehold on survival; for a long-distance migrant, the situation is aggravated by the



219. Nest of Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasii*, Krasnoperovaya, near Tara, Russia, June 1990.

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greatly reduced chance of birds successfully locating a mate in the vastness of their potential nesting areas. It is tempting to look to the apparent continued survival in the Americas (until the 1980s at least) of the equally rare Eskimo Curlew *N. borealis* to provide some glimmer of hope, but it would be foolhardy to bank on its Eurasian cousin surviving as long.

Current efforts to conserve the species are co-ordinated by the Slender-billed Curlew Working Group, which was established in 1997 under the auspices of the Bonn Convention (CMS), with BirdLife International acting as the secretariat (U.GalloOrsi@birdlife.agro.nl). The group is chaired by GCB, and met most recently in April 2001 in Kiev; a report of this meeting is available on request from Umberto Gallo-Orsi. A great deal of effort has been devoted to Slender-billed Curlew research and conservation over the last 15 years, but, sadly, it would appear that this has had limited direct effect on the species' chances of survival. If we are not to write off the species, one can only conclude that greatly increased efforts are needed throughout its range, but especially in the putative breeding area.

The last avian species to become extinct in Europe was the Great Auk *Pinguinus impennis* in 1852 (BirdLife International 2000); are the countries of Europe and the European ornithological community really prepared to see another extinction on our doorstep in the twenty-first century? If not, then a quantum leap is needed in efforts to save the species, with major funding required from key players such as the EU and World Bank/Global Environment Fund. With the rapid expansion of the EU eastwards, a significant spin-off would be the increase in collaboration with ornithologists in eastern Europe and Russia, and promotion of conservation action by governments. If effective action is not taken, there is a very real possibility that the species may have been added to the British List in 2002 only to be declared extinct a few years later.

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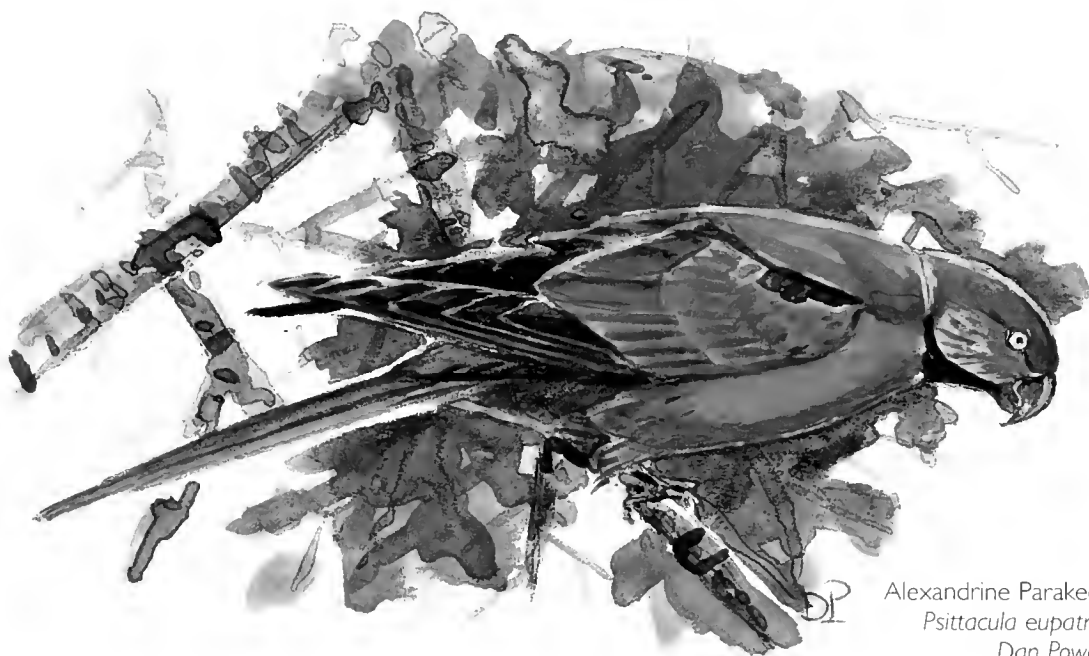
supported by RSPB, the Swedish Ornithological Society and later the EC (ACNAT programme), and supervised by Mike Rands and Borja Heredia. The expeditions were supported by the Biological Institute of the USSR Academy of Sciences (Siberian Branch), now the Institute of Animal Ecology and Systematics, and we are grateful to the Director, Dr Evsikov, for his support. AKY is grateful to the Dutch Government, through the framework of bilateral co-operation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries, and to GCB for their continuing support. We are indebted to our companions in the field, including John O'Sullivan and Svetlana Aguilova. The translations of Ushakov's papers are by Svetlana Gretton and Mantas Zurba (the latter arranged by Eugenius Nowak), and by Mike Wilson (who kindly investigated other references also, and commented on this paper). We are grateful to Henry McGhie at The Manchester Museum for investigating the egg in the Dresser collection, and for his comments on this paper.

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Breeding parrots in Britain

Chris Butler



Alexandrine Parakeet
Psittacula eupatria
Dan Powell

In October 2000, the author began a study on the population biology of Rose-ringed Parakeets *Psittacula krameri* in Britain. It was discovered that not only were Rose-ringed Parakeets more numerous and widespread than was previously thought, but that three other parrot species were nesting in Britain as well.

From October 2000 to May 2002, an extensive search was made for Rose-ringed Parakeets in areas where they had been reported in county bird reports, in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Dorset, Greater London, Kent, Surrey and southwest Wales. In addition, requests were made through various media (e.g. newspaper and radio) for volunteers to send in their sightings of parakeets. Sightings of parakeets outside the previously known range were then investigated.

In addition to the expected Rose-ringed Parakeets, Monk Parakeets *Myiopsitta monachus*, Alexandrine Parakeets *P. eupatria*, and Blue-crowned Parakeets *Aratinga acuticaudata* were found nesting. The following species accounts summarise these new discoveries.

Rose-ringed Parakeet

During the last six years, Rose-ringed Parakeets have undergone a substantial increase in population (see table 1). Pithon & Dytham (1999) reported that in 1996 there were approximately 1,500 birds roosting at the four major roosts (at Esher and Reigate in Surrey, and Lewisham and Ramsgate in Kent). By the winter of 2000/01, that number had grown to an estimated 4,300 birds, and by winter 2001/02 it had increased further still, to approximately 5,900 birds. It is likely that the population is somewhat larger than this, since it appears that not all of the parakeets roost in these four main roosts, as small, transitory roosts have been found elsewhere (e.g. near Maidenhead, Berkshire).

At the same time, it appears that the range of this species has increased since the 1988-1991 Breeding Bird Atlas (Gibbons *et al.* 1993) was published (see figs. 1-3). Parakeets have continued to expand westwards into Buckinghamshire and Berkshire, northwards into Middlesex, and farther south within Surrey. Indeed, they are now present as far south as

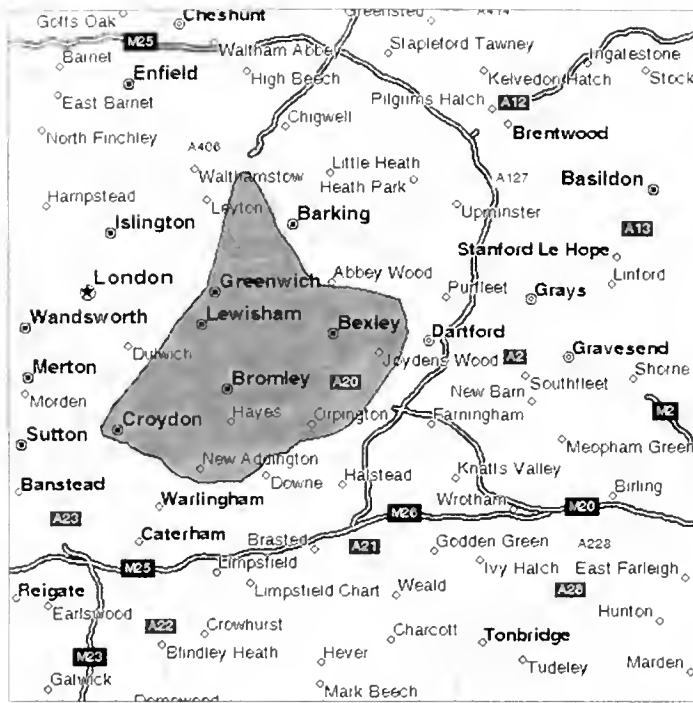


Fig. 1. The distribution of the southeast London subpopulation of Rose-ringed Parakeets *Psittacula krameri*, in 2001.

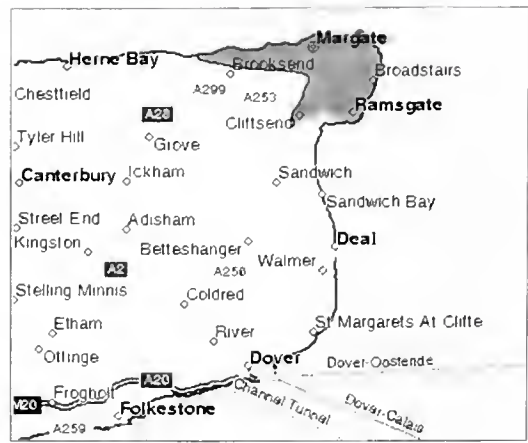


Fig. 3. The distribution of the Isle of Thanet, Kent, subpopulation of Rose-ringed Parakeets *Psittacula krameri*, in 2001.



Maps provided by © www.mapquest.com

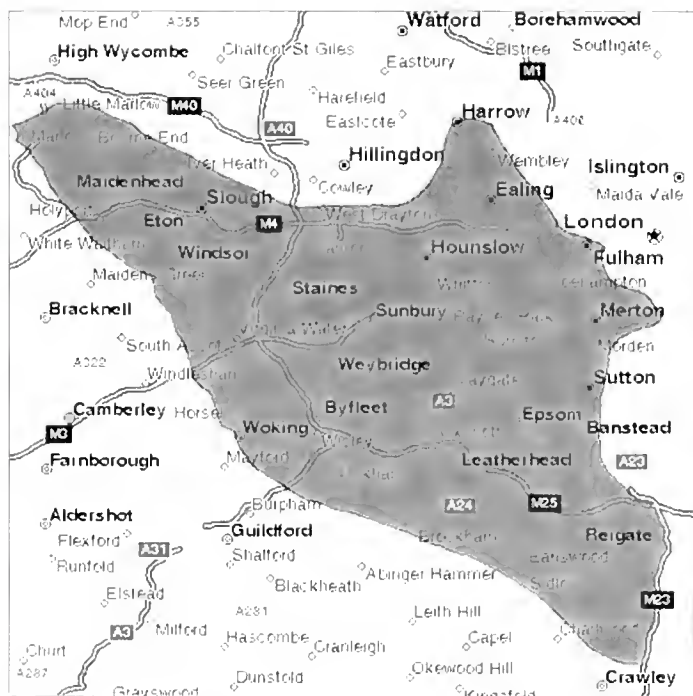


Fig. 2. The distribution of the southwest London subpopulation of Rose-ringed Parakeets *Psittacula krameri*, in 2001.

Gatwick Airport, Sussex (J. Hobson, verbally). In addition, a small population of 12 birds has become established at Studland, Dorset, while another small population, at Brighton, East Sussex, appears to be stable (J. Hobson, verbally). Similarly, the range of parakeets on the Isle of Thanet, Kent, does not appear to have increased. Surprisingly, however, they appear to have vanished as a breeding species from Essex (S. Harris, verbally).

Care should be taken when identifying Rose-

ringed Parakeets outside their established range in southeast England. The very similar Alexandrine Parakeet is frequently kept in captivity and does escape occasionally. A pure Alexandrine Parakeet will have a dark red shoulder patch, a completely red lower mandible, and will be noticeably larger than the otherwise similar Rose-ringed Parakeet. Alexandrine Parakeets are, however, occasionally crossed with Rose-ringed Parakeets by aviculturists in an effort to create colour mutations (Smith & Smith 1997). These hybrids have a pale orange shoulder patch which may be difficult to see (and may even be lacking altogether in some young birds). They are still substantially larger than a Rose-ringed Parakeet, however, and retain the completely red lower mandible.

Monk Parakeet

Monk Parakeets were found to be breeding in Borehamwood, Hertfordshire. A total of seven nests were located during the spring of 2001. The first egg was noted on 20th May, and by 1st June eggs were present in three further nests. Unfortunately, the remaining three nests were inaccessible. These birds were first noticed by local residents in 1993 (M. Campbell, verbally), and the population has slowly grown to its current total of 32 individuals.

This appears to be the only known colony of Monk Parakeets breeding in Britain. From 1987 to 1998 a population of up to 30 Monk Para-

Table 1. Highest annual counts of Rose-ringed Parakeets *Psittacula krameri* at the four major roosts in southeast England during the period 1995-2000.

Year	Esher	Lewisham	Ramsgate	Reigate
1995	692	–	130	–
1996	1,123	85	299	118
1997	1,507	275	314	123
1998	1,704	210	437	75
1999	2,500	–	480	–
Winter 2000/01	2,999	641	435	277
Winter 2001/02	4,096	900	350	540

Figures derived from county bird reports, except for 1996, 2000/01 and 2001/02. Data for 1996 from Pithon & Dytham (1999), who estimated a total population of approximately 1,500 birds, based on simultaneous counts of roosts. Data for 2000/01 and 2001/02 collected by volunteers as part of a current study at the Edward Grey Institute.

keets was present in Tiverton, Devon, but this colony died out after a change in ownership of the land where they nested (Grant 1996; Glaves & Darlaston 2000). Additionally, the colony of nine birds in Barnton, Cheshire that was present from 1988 to 1993 appears to have since died out (Gibbons *et al.* 1993; Gabb *et al.* 1994). Finally, there was a pair of Monk Parakeets at Lonsdale Road Reservoir, Surrey, during 1996-2001 (Moon 1997; S. Spooner, verbally). These birds attempted to breed in 1996 and 1997, but no young were produced. During February 2001, one was found dead and the other subsequently disappeared (S. Spooner, verbally).

Alexandrine Parakeet

A pair of hybrid Alexandrine Parakeets was found occupying a tree hole at Sidcup, Kent, from April to early July 2001. Unfortunately, it was not possible to examine the contents of this presumed nest. A third bird seen intermittently in the park may have been a fledgling from 2000, since it often associated with the pair. Two hybrid Alexandrine Parakeet nests were found in Sidcup during spring 2002. Since bigamy has not been documented for this species in the wild, it was a surprise to discover that a single male cared for both of these nests. These three individuals have been observed at the Rose-ringed Parakeet roost in Lewisham in addition to three apparently pure Alexandrine Parakeets (pers. obs.).

In addition, Alexandrine Parakeets have bred since 1997 at Fazackerley, Merseyside (Ogilvie *et al.* 1999). In 1998, two pairs were reported breeding at this location, where they fledged broods of five and three young. All 12 birds were seen together on 1st May 1998. Subsequently, however, many were reportedly shot,

although one pair survived and bred again in 1999 (Ogilvie *et al.* 2000, M. Ogilvie, verbally).

Blue-crowned Parakeet

A nest with four eggs was found in April 2001 in Bromley, Kent; it had, however, failed, possibly owing to predation by Grey Squirrels *Sciurus carolinensis* (Butler *et al.* 2002). A pair of Blue-crowned Parakeets was first noticed coming to a feeder in Bromley, in 1997 (Williams 1999). By 1999, the number coming to the feeder had increased to eight (including three juveniles), and a flock of 15 birds was seen in nearby Beckenham (Williams 1999; J. Ibberson, verbally). During spring 2001, the maximum count was of five individuals at a feeder in Bromley (M. Williams, verbally).

Discussion

It is unknown whether any Category E species (Monk Parakeet, Alexandrine Parakeet or Blue-crowned Parakeet) will eventually develop self-sustaining populations. Of these three species, Monk Parakeet has perhaps the greatest potential to become an established exotic, firstly because it currently has the largest breeding population (7+ pairs), and secondly because it is able to thrive in cold temperatures. Populations of Monk Parakeets in Chicago, USA, have been increasing steadily since the 1990s, despite average January minimum temperatures of -10.5°C (Hyman & Jones 1995).

It should, however, be noted that seemingly well-established feral parrot populations can collapse. In 1969, four pairs of Budgerigars *Melopsittacus undulatus* were introduced to Tresco, Isles of Scilly, from Windsor Lodge in Berkshire, and during the autumn of 1970, six more pairs were released (King 1978). By 1975,



Dan Powell

Monk Parakeets *Myiopsitta monachus*

the Budgerigar population on Tresco consisted of 100 birds, including 35 breeding pairs, and small groups would occasionally be recorded on other islands (Hunt & Robinson 1976; King 1978). One particular resident, who provided food for the Budgerigars, moved away from the island that year, and it appears that supplementary food was no longer put out. By 1976, the population had crashed, and only one bird was still present on the island in December (Hunt & Robinson 1977). No Budgerigars were reported during 1977 (Hunt & Robinson 1978).

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Evolutionary relationships of stonechats and related species inferred from mitochondrial-DNA sequences and genomic fingerprinting

Michael Wink, Hedi Sauer-Gürth
and Eberhard Gwinner

ABSTRACT Sequence data of the mitochondrial *cytochrome b* gene and genomic fingerprinting provide good evidence that the geographically separated taxa of the Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* complex represent distinct genetic lineages, which became separated more than one million years ago. The distinct genetic pattern implies that hybridisation and gene flow between these lineages no longer takes place to a significant degree. Since these lineages also differ in morphology, breeding behaviour, vocalisations and physiological control of their annual cycles, we suggest treating European Stonechat *S. torquata*, African Stonechat *S. [t.] axillaris*, Reunion Stonechat *S. [t.] tectes*, Canary Islands Stonechat *S. dacotiae* and Siberian Stonechat *S. [t.] maura* as 'good' and distinct species.

Footnote: In this paper, the vernacular and scientific names used for the key taxa of interest are those preferred by the author, although this does not necessarily reflect editorial policy.

Introduction

Systematic classifications are usually based on similarity, with taxa that show the greatest similarity being considered to be closely related. Since taxa which are only distantly related may, however, come to show morphological similarities owing to adaptation to similar ecological constraints – 'convergent evolution', one example being penguins (Spheniscidae) and auks (Alcidae) – evolutionary trees based on the study of adaptive characters can lead to erroneous taxonomic conclusions.

The analysis of nuclear or mitochondrial marker genes has, during the last 15 years, become widely used to reconstruct phylogenetic relationships between taxa in all fields of zoology, including ornithology (see Avise 1994; Mindell 1999). Molecular data have the great advantage that convergent evolution does not impair the analysis to the same degree as it does

for morphological data. If two or more taxa belong to the same species, their marker genes are identical, or almost identical, and intraspecific genetic distances are generally significantly smaller than those between established species. Molecular data may also provide an estimate for the timescale over which a particular evolutionary step has taken place (the 'molecular clock') and, therefore, allow both a phylogenetic and a geographical analysis of the unknown past of a group of organisms. Molecular data have consequently become an important tool for taxonomic and evolutionary studies.

Few molecular studies have addressed phylogenetic relationships in stonechats and other members of the family Turdidae. Based on the analysis of 300 base pairs of the mitochondrial *cytochrome b* gene, preliminary data have suggested that European Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*, Siberian Stonechat *S. [t.] maura* and



220. Male European Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*, Suffolk, May 2001.

African Stonechat *S. [t.] axillaris* have already diverged to a high degree (Wittmann 1994; Wittmann *et al.* 1995).

For the analysis presented here, we sequenced most of the *cytochrome b* gene of 23 turdid taxa in seven genera, and also enlarged the dataset by including more stonechat taxa than in our previous study (Wittmann *et al.* 1995).

The fertilised egg contains only its mother's mitochondria but receives nuclear DNA from both parents. Since mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) is inherited only through the female line, it does not fully reflect the evolution of all members of the species, and can give a distorted view of phylogenetic relationships. We have, therefore, additionally analysed the structure of the nuclear genome using the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) to produce 'Inter-Simple-Sequence Repeat' ('ISSR')-profiles, as described in an appendix at the end of this paper. ISSR-PCR is a very effective method by which to understand interspecific variation and genetic structure of populations (Damodar Reddy *et al.* 1999; Ge & Sun 1999), to sex individuals (Wink *et al.* 1998), to generate species-specific genomic fingerprints (Gupta *et al.* 1994; Zietkiewicz *et al.* 1994) and to detect hybridisation between taxa (Wink *et al.* 2000).

Materials and methods

Blood and tissues were either preserved in an EDTA buffer (0.1 M Tris [pH 7.4], 10% EDTA, 1% NaI, 0.1% thymol) or in ethanol (Wink *et al.* 1998) and stored at -20°C until processing. Total DNA was extracted from the blood

samples by an overnight incubation at 37°C in lysis buffer (10 mM Tris [pH 7.5], 25 mM EDTA, 75 mM NaCl, 1% SDS) including 1 mg of Proteinase K (Merck, Darmstadt), followed by a standard phenol/chloroform protein extraction. DNA was precipitated from the supernatant with 0.8 volume of cold isopropanol, centrifuged, washed, dried and resuspended in TE buffer.

Full details of the sequencing technology, the ISSR-PCRs, and parameters and methodologies used to draw up the phylogenetic trees can be obtained from the authors.

Results and Discussion

The analysis was restricted mainly to species of the Western Palearctic, and comprised the following genera: stonechats *Saxicola*, rock thrushes *Monticola*, redstarts *Phoenicurus*, wheatears *Oenanthe*, robins *Erithacus*, nightingales *Luscinia*, and thrushes *Turdus*. The dippers *Cinclus* were included as a possibly closely related comparison (ingroup), and the wrens *Troglodytes* as a distantly related outgroup. Although we sequenced several individuals of each taxon (between six and 20 in the case of stonechat subspecies), within any given subspecies all individuals clustered as a single genealogically related group derived from a single common ancestor (a monophyletic clade). One to three representatives of each taxon were chosen for an analysis which aimed to outline the patterns of phylogeny and speciation within stonechats and related Turdidae.

In fig. 1, the result of maximum parsimony and maximum likelihood analyses of mtDNA

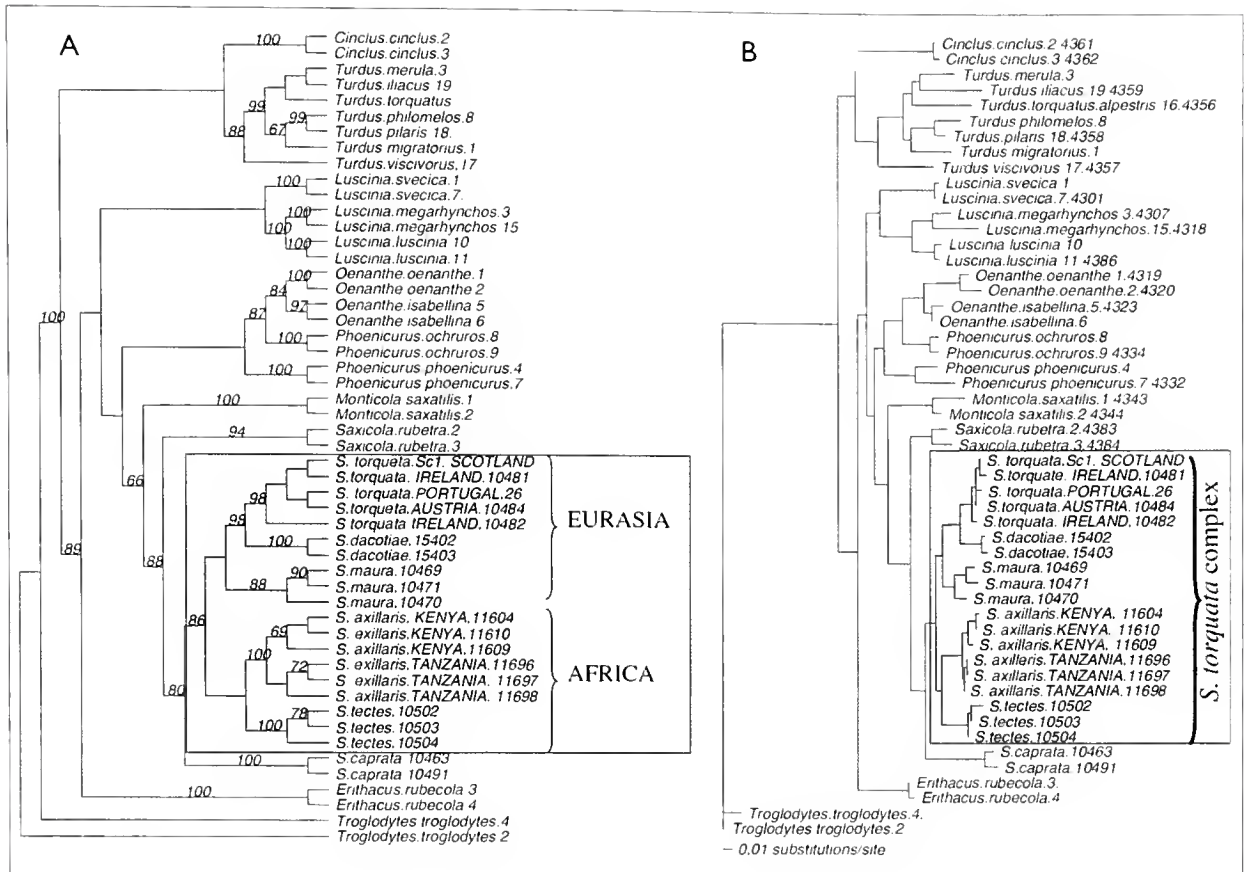


Fig. 1. A molecular phylogeny of stonechats and related turdids based on sequence data of the mitochondrial cytochrome *b* gene (see text for more details).

A. Maximum parsimony analysis; (bootstrap values above 60% are given at the corresponding bifurcations).

B. Maximum likelihood analysis; branch lengths correspond to genetic distances.

The maximum parsimony method takes the DNA sequences of the extant species and creates a phylogenetic tree linking them all, one which requires the least number of mutational changes during the evolution of all the species. It assumes that no more evolution will have taken place than was absolutely necessary. In contrast, the maximum likelihood method does not make this assumption. It takes specific mathematical models based on current knowledge of how DNA (or proteins) mutates during evolution, accepting that mutation is a random process. Using this knowledge, it is possible to work out the statistical likelihood of any phylogenetic tree based on the observed DNA sequences being the right ones. Of all possible trees, the one calculated as being 'most likely' is accepted.

are given. Both methods arrange the taxa into identical monophyletic groups and are also congruent in branching order. Members of the genus *Saxicola* form a clade (supported by a bootstrap statistical value of 88%), which derives from a common ancestor that is shared with Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*. The *Monticola/Saxicola* clade shares ancestry with the genera *Luscinia*, *Oenanthe*, *Phoenicurus* and *Erithacus*. These genera are grouped in the apparently monophyletic tribe Saxicolini (supported by a bootstrap value of 89%).

Members of the genus *Turdus*, which form a monophyletic clade (88% bootstrap support), always cluster as a sister group to the tribe Saxicolini. The Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* shows no close affinity to members of the genus *Turdus*, (pairwise genetic distances 12-15%), or to wrens with which they have also been associ-

ated. We need a more complete dataset before considering the real affinities of dippers and wrens.

Relationships within the stonechat complex

Mitochondrial-DNA sequences show that, within the genus *Saxicola*, the Whinchat *S. rubetra* takes a basal position, followed by Pied Stonechat *S. caprata*. Both these species are, therefore, assumed to have split from the ancestors of European and Siberian Stonechats early in the evolution of the genus. The *S. torquata* complex, which includes *S. torquata*, *S. [t.] tectes*, *S. [t.] maura*, *S. [t.] axillaris* and *S. dacotiae*, clusters as a monophyletic group (with bootstrap support 86%). Within the complex the following relationships are apparent: the Canary Islands Stonechat *S. dacotiae* and the European Stonechat *S. torquata rubicola/liber-*

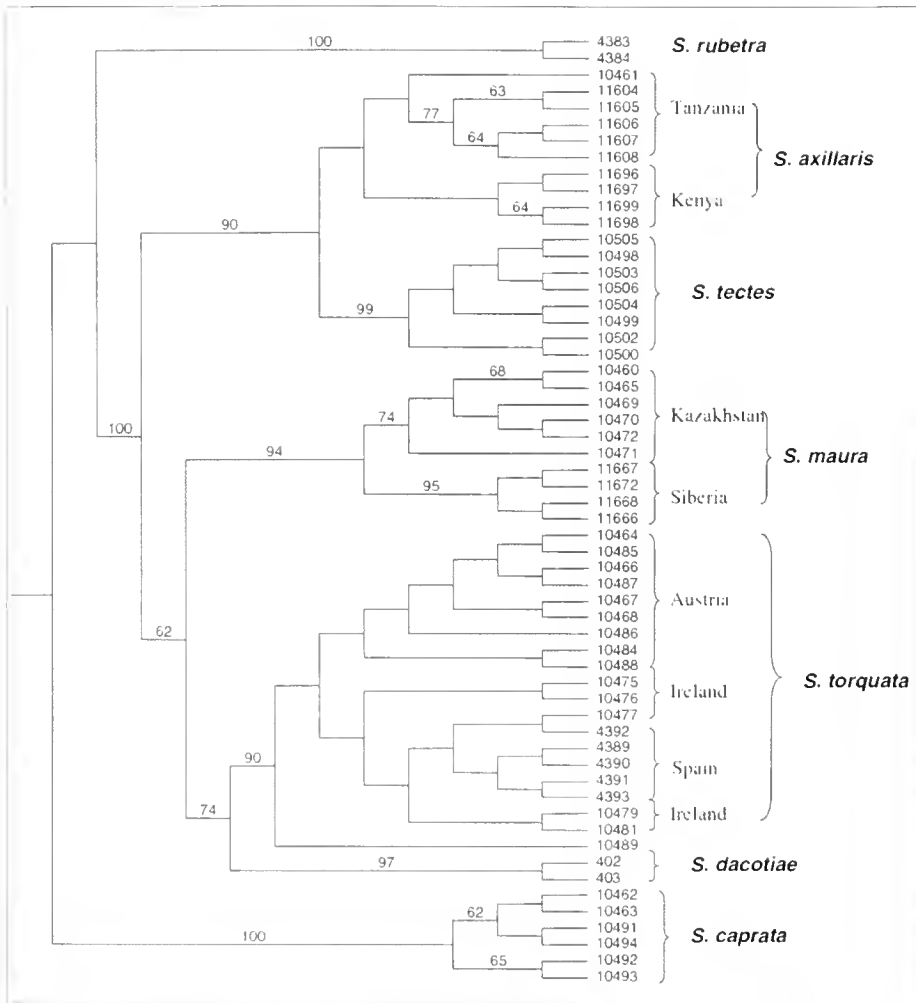


Fig. 2. UPGMA cluster analysis of ISSR-profiles.

The pattern of polymorphic-ISSR fragments was recorded in a 0/1 matrix and the results were analysed by UPGMA bootstrap analyses (1,000 replications; bootstrap values above 60% are given at the corresponding bifurcations). Numbers following taxon names refer to internal accession numbers.

hibernans appear as sister taxa (supported by a bootstrap value of 98%). The Reunion Stonechat *S. [t.] tectes* and the African Stonechat *S. [t.] axillaris* form another sister pair. The Siberian Stonechat *S. [t.] maura* shows affinities to the *S. dacotiae/S. torquata*

clade. Within the African Stonechat, two populations were studied, from Kenya and Tanzania, which show different and consistent mtDNA sequences (haplotypes), the genetic distances being 0.4-0.6%. Within *S. torquata*, a clear attribution of mtDNA haplotypes to subspecies (*S. t. hibernans* from Ireland, *S. t. rubicola* from central and western Europe) and/or geographic ranges was not apparent. It is not, therefore, possible to define subspecies of the European Stonechat on the basis of their mtDNA alone, although intraspecific variation is obvious (intraspecific distances 0.1-1.3%).

The Canary Islands Stonechat *S. dacotiae* (which occurs on Fuerteventura) is closely related to the European Stonechat *S. torquata*. The genetic distance of 2.7-3.5% implies that these taxa diverged about 1.3-1.7 million years ago, if the '2% per million years' rule (Wilson *et al.* 1987) is taken for calibration of mtDNA. Most likely, the Canary Islands Stonechat derived from a founder population of European Stonechats, which became resident on the Canary Islands, or from a population of Euro-



221. Female European Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*, Suffolk, May 2001.



Robin Chittenden

222. First-winter European Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*, Norfolk, September 1996.

pean Stonechats living in northern Africa. Both taxa share common ancestry with the Siberian Stonechat, from which they differ respectively by 2.7% and 5.1% base-pair substitutions.

The African Stonechat *S. [t.] axillaris*, differs from the European Stonechat by 4.6-5.7% substitutions. It clusters as a sister taxon to the Reunion Stonechat *S. [t.] tectes*, which has sometimes been recognised as a distinct species (Hall & Moreau 1970). Pairwise distances amount to 4.4-5.1%.

Using genomic fingerprinting with ISSR-PCR, it is apparent that *S. t. rubicola/hibernans*, *S. [t.] axillaris*, *S. dacotiae*, *S. [t.] tectes* and *S. [t.] maura* form distinct genetic entities (fig. 2). Once again, *S. caprata* and *S. rubetra* cluster at the base of the tree, as in the analyses derived from the mitochondrial *cytochrome b* gene. The stonechats are again recognised as a monophyletic assemblage (bootstrap support 86%); the relationships within this complex are almost identical to those found for *cytochrome b*: *S. dacotiae* clusters as a sister group to *S. torquata rubicola/hibernans*; *S. [t.] axillaris* is a sister group to *S. [t.] tectes*, and *S. [t.] maura* is intermediate. Also, the phylogeographic divisions within *S. [t.] axillaris* and *S. [t.] maura* can be recovered by the ISSR-data. The ISSR-profiles, based on nuclear DNA, clearly indicate that the results obtained from mitochondrial *cytochrome b* sequences correctly reflect the phylogeny of this group of birds.

ISSR and *cytochrome b* sequences both show a certain degree of geographic variation in the

DNA of stonechats (figs. 1-2). Because we have sampled a limited number of populations so far, our analysis of intraspecific variation must be regarded as preliminary. It would certainly be rewarding for further investigations to sample genetic variation across the complete geographic distribution range of stonechats.

The forms *S. [t.] tectes*, *S. [t.] maura*, *S. [t.] axillaris* and *S. dacotiae* have often been treated as subspecies of Common Stonechat *S. torquata* (see Sibley & Monroe 1990). On the basis of diagnostic differences in morphology, breeding biology and distribution, however, these taxa have already been recognised as distinct species in several bird guides and handbooks. If the members of the *S. torquata* complex were closely related subspecies, we should expect a cluster showing no (or just extremely small) genetic differences between each of the stonechat taxa. Instead, both the *cytochrome b* sequence data and ISSR-profiles exhibit a well-developed phylogenetic pattern with relatively long branch lengths separating them (figs. 1-2). Genetic distances between the taxa of the *S. torquata* complex range between 6.1% and 2.7%, whereas distances within a given subspecies do not exceed 1.5%. The genetic distances within the *S. torquata* complex imply divergence times of one to three million years. In our dataset, genetic distances for other sibling species are, for example, 6.6% for Rufous *Luscinia megarhynchos* and Thrush Nightingales *L. luscinia*; 5.0% for Northern *Oenanthe oenanthe* and Isabelline Wheatears *O.*

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223. Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola [torquata] maura*, Khao Yai, Thailand, November 1991.

isabellina; and 3.4% for Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* and Song Thrush *T. philomelos*. These comparisons indicate that the genetic distance found between members of the *S. torquata* complex are in a similar range to other closely related, but distinct species. It is, therefore, highly likely that the taxa within the stonechat complex represent distinct genetic lineages. Not only do they differ in genetic terms, but they also differ by their allopatric distribution, ecology, physiology (Gwinner & Scheuerlein 1999; Helm & Gwinner 1999) and morphology (Starck *et al.* 1995; Helm & Gwinner 2001). As a consequence, European Stonechat, African Stonechat, Canary Islands Stonechat, Reunion Stonechat and Siberian Stonechat can be regarded as distinct species, not only within the Phylogenetic Species Concept but also within the Biological Species Concept.

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Appendix ISSR-PCR

The genomes of all animals and plants contain stretches of small repeated sequences of DNA such as .CACACACACACACACA. that occur because of faults during the processes of replication and repair of DNA. These are called 'microsatellites'. In general, if there is gene flow between two different populations or sub-species, their patterns of microsatellites will be broadly identical (although mutations may still be found). Once gene flow is restricted, however, such as between closely related species or isolated subspecies that no longer breed with each other, the number, length and arrangement of these repeats starts to diverge randomly. 'ISSR-PCR' attempts to turn this divergence into a form that humans can see and score. It uses a small manufactured stretch of

DNA (a primer) that binds specifically to some of these satellites in DNA isolated from the taxa of interest. An enzyme is used to create many thousands or millions of copies of the DNA that lies between these microsatellites. These copies can be separated and visualised according to their size by running them through a gel that acts like a sieve. Individuals with identical microsatellite patterns in their DNA will produce identical bands on the gel, but if mutations have occurred, different individuals will show slightly different banding patterns. The presence or absence of bands on the gel can be scored for each individual, and these scores fed into the algorithm that draws up phylogenetic trees. Taxa with the most similar banding patterns will tend to be the most closely related.

Looking back

Fifty years ago:

[From: Blue-cheeked Bee-eater in Scilly: a new British Bird] 'Miss Hilda M. Quick, to whom full credit for the observation is due, sent us a short account of the bird immediately after she had seen it. At our request she has supplied the following details of the occurrence:

"On June 22nd, 1951, having a visitor staying with me on St Agnes (Isles of Scilly), I went up the lane before breakfast to get the morning's milk. Something skimmed across the path which registered as strange...only a glimpse but it was definitely odd. I wondered if it could have been a Starling looking greener than usual, or a pale Swallow with a light sheen on it (the flight suggested something of the Swallow tribe). However, I had to go back and get breakfast for my guest, and leave the mystery for a moment.

"While we were breakfasting, a neighbour came in to say that Mr Lewis Hicks had seen a strange and most wonderful bird. So we left breakfast standing and rushed out; collected Mr Hicks and went with him to the fields where he had seen it. (He told me afterwards that at first he could not believe his eyes, and went to fetch his wife to 'come and tell me if you see what I see!') Fairly soon we saw our quarry afar off, and presently it perched at some distance, but in good view. There was no doubt that it was a bee-eater; one knew it from pictures, and the curved bill and elongated tail-feathers could be clearly seen. It seemed to be returning fairly regularly to one spot on the telegraph wires, so I stalked gently up the lane to a position within 20 feet or so of where it came back to perch. It made frequent sallies after insects and brought them back to the wire

to eat. ('Sitting there eating up my bees as fast as it can!' said Mr Hicks, who has hives...but we could not be sure that they were truly bees that it was catching.) Once, its prey escaped from its bill, and it did a lightning dive and turned to recapture it and bring it back to the wire.'" (*Brit. Birds* 45: 225, July 1952)

Fifty years ago:

[From: Reports from Observatories, 1951. 'MONKS' HOUSE BIRD OBSERVATORY, 1951. BY DR E. A. R. ENNION.] 'MONKS' HOUSE OBSERVATORY commenced its first season's trapping towards the end of April, 1951, after a winter spent in alterations and equipment to provide living and working quarters for the Director and Mrs Ennion, and for up to a full complement of about 25 visitors. It is therefore a rather more permanent establishment than are many of its fellow Observatories and, in its first year, has welcomed some 500 visitors, most, but not all, ornithologists. Four Bird Courses, each lasting a fortnight, have been held, together with a number of "ringing instruction weeks"; also many Courses in marine and other branches of outdoor biology at times when bird activities are to the fore. The Observatory is thus able to cover a wide field and to pursue its recording and ringing throughout the year, especially in winter when about 1,000 birds of 25 spp. (including 450 Greenfinches and 250 Linnets) were trapped between autumn and spring passages, 1951-52. The proportion of Greenfinches retrapped in stackyards and roosts suggests that at least half of the local population of these birds has been ringed: we have barely touched the Linnets!' (*Brit. Birds* 45: 233, July 1952)

Conservation research news

Compiled by Richard Bradbury and Mark Eaton



Birds and Agriculture

Farmland birds in Britain have declined markedly in recent decades. Many species are affected, whether migrant or resident, insectivore or granivore. Since bird populations epitomise the health of our farmed landscape, the British Government has undertaken a Public Service Agreement to 'reverse the long-term decline in the number of farmland birds'.

Since the scale of the problem became apparent, in the early 1990s, various organisations have been working together to solve farmland bird declines. In March 2002, the Association of Applied Biologists held a landmark conference on recent farmland bird research. Twenty-seven oral presentations and seven posters were given, and are fully described in the conference proceedings. Selected papers are discussed here.

Large-scale changes in distribution, abundance and demography

Long-term datasets collected by BTO volunteers have been invaluable in alerting us to the national scale of farmland bird declines (Fuller *et al.* 1995). Siriwardena & Robinson (2002) showed how BTO data have revealed which changes in demographic rates or habitat might have caused the losses of each species. The exact timing of decline has varied among species, suggesting that different species have been affected by different aspects of agricultural intensification. Reduced survival rates have been important for many decreasing passerines (especially granivores), but lower breeding success seems to have driven the decline of Linnets *Carduelis cannabina* and certain nidifu-

gous species. Unfortunately, BTO datasets cannot detect changes in numbers of breeding attempts or post-fledging survival rates, which remain a priority for future research. Finally, the authors showed that population densities are higher and breeding success is better for many species in mixed farming areas, implicating the loss of a habitat mosaic as an important factor in the population declines.

Fuller, R. J., Gregory, R. D., Gibbons, D. W., Marchant, J. H., Wilson, J. D., Baillie, S. R., & Carter, N. 1995. Population declines and range contractions among lowland farmland birds in Britain. *Cons. Biol.* 9: 1425-1441.
Siriwardena, G. M., & Robinson, R. A. 2002. Farmland birds demography and abundance. *Aspects of Applied Biology* 67: 179-188.

Ground-nesting birds on grazing marshes

Mathematical models that relate bird distribution to variation in habitat features can reveal species' habitat preferences. Such models have shown, for example, that Sky Larks *Alauda arvensis* prefer set-aside or spring cereals (Wilson *et al.* 1997), presumably because they provide the sparse vegetation structure that Sky Larks need for nesting and foraging. Milsom *et al.* (2002) investigated the relationship between the presence of various waders and Sky Larks in

grass fields and the management of those fields, at the North Kent Marshes and Broads ESA. They also tested how well models from one site predicted wader distribution at the other. At both sites, the presence of ground-nesting species within fields was associated positively with field area and negatively with the degree of field enclosure. Sward structure, surface topography and surface wetness were also important, but the detail of these effects differed between

sites. This suggests that models which reflect local conditions may generate better management prescriptions at a given site than a simpler model with geographic generality.

Milsom, T. P., Langton, S. D., Bishop, J. D., Hart, J. D., Parkin, W. K., Allen, D. S., Kirkham, F. W., & Lyons, H. A. 2002.

Habitat models of bird species distribution on coastal grazing marshes: a multi-site comparison. *Aspects of Applied Biology* 67: 147-154.
Wilson, J. D., Evans, J., Browne, S. J., & King, J. R. 1997. Territory distribution and breeding success of Skylarks *Alauda arvensis* on organic and intensive farmland in southern England. *J. Appl. Ecol.* 34: 1462-1478.

Access to food

While large-scale datasets can identify the changes in demographic rates underlying population declines, and bird-habitat models allow us to determine habitat preferences, we still need to understand the ecological mechanisms that link changes in habitat management to changes in demography. Morris *et al.* (2002) investigated the factors that influenced where Yellowhammers *Emberiza citrinella* foraged within cereal fields when looking for invertebrates to feed to nestlings. The places where the birds foraged had more invertebrates, but also had a sparser,

shorter sward structure than elsewhere in the crop. This suggests that food accessibility, as well as its abundance, determines habitat quality for this species. Useful management prescriptions may include reduced summer pesticide use, wider drill-row spacing, reduced fertiliser inputs and creation of small bare patches by momentarily turning off seed drills while sowing.

Morris, A. J., Bradbury, R. B., & Wilson, J. D. 2002. Determinants of patch selection by Yellowhammers *Emberiza citrinella* foraging in cereal crops. *Aspects of Applied Biology* 67: 43-50.

New threats to birds of prey

While the previous paper demonstrated the potential for pesticides to affect birds indirectly, Burn *et al.* (2002) reminded us of the problems of pesticide poisoning in decades past, by presenting evidence of widespread contamination by second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides such as difenacoum and bromadiolone. These more-toxic replacements for warfarin (and related compounds) have been detected in a range of birds of prey such as Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*, Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* and Barn Owl *Tyto alba*. Red Kites *Milvus milvus* may be particularly suscep-

tible, as they will forage on carrion near human habitation, and may take rats killed by poison. Of 20 dead kites collected in England and Wales between 1994 and 1999, 14 had detectable rodenticide residues. It is, at present, unclear whether, and to what extent, these levels of contamination affect birds of prey, although there is a clear possibility that lethal or sublethal effects could be causing declines in some species or slowing the recovery of others.

Burn, A. J., Carter, I., & Shore, R. F. 2002. The threats to birds of prey in the UK from second-generation rodenticides. *Aspects of Applied Biology* 67: 203-212.

Delayed impacts of winter food supply on breeding success

Much work has focused on the impact of habitat changes in winter on survival, or on the effects of those changes in summer on breeding success. Factors acting in one season may, however, have a delayed impact in the following season. Draycott (2002) showed that pre-breeding-season food supplies can affect breeding success. Common Pheasants *Phasianus colchicus* provided with supplementary food after 1st February were in better body condition than those which had access only to natural food resources, enabling them to fledge twice as many chicks. This was most likely a

result of an increased ability to raise repeat broods. Some farmland birds seem to be breeding later and making fewer breeding attempts (e.g. Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*; Browne & Aebischer 2001), and Draycott's work suggests that failure to achieve breeding condition sooner, because of reduced pre-breeding food supply, might be a causal mechanism.

Browne, S. J., & Aebischer, N. J. 2001. The role of agricultural intensification in the decline of the Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*. English Nature Research Report No. 421.
Draycott, R. A. H. 2002. Spring feeding pheasants on farmland. *Aspects of Applied Biology* 67: 197-202.

Species-specific conservation measures – for Red-billed Choughs

In addition to the 'usual suspects', the conference included a number of papers on species which might not immediately spring to mind as farmland birds. Johnstone *et al.* (2002) presented the results of a study on habitat use by breeding Red-billed Choughs *Pyrhcorax pyrrhcorax* in North Wales. They found that choughs are particularly fond of the short-cropped turf produced by heavy grazing, along with minor habitats such as pathways and cloddiau (traditional stone and earth stock boundaries). Red-billed Chough is not a species easily protected by a reserves network, owing to their

low breeding densities, so it is important that the wider countryside provides suitable habitat in appropriate regions. At present, trends towards lower grazing densities and land abandonment are threatening Red-billed Choughs by reducing the availability of short turf, and the authors recommended that grazing prescriptions are included in geographically targeted agri-environment schemes.

Johnstone, I., Whitehead, S. C., & Lamacraft, D. 2002. The importance of grazed habitat for foraging Choughs *Pyrhcorax pyrrhcorax*, and its implications for agri-environment schemes. *Aspects of Applied Biology* 67: 59-66.

Growing winter food for farmland birds

Many declining farmland birds are dependent on seeds in winter, yet traditional seed sources (such as weedy stubbles and open grain stores) are now rare. Consequently, research is needed to identify the best way to provide winter seed food, one option being annual or biennial 'wildlife crops'. Boatman & Stoate (2002) showed that the best mixes of crops vary among species. It emerged, however, that a small selection of crops, such as

kale, quinoa, teasel, cereal and linseed could provide winter food for most species, as well as providing foraging and nesting habitat in summer. This work demonstrates the importance of well-replicated experimental trials to improve prescriptions for agri-environment schemes.

Boatman, N. D., & Stoate, C. 2002. Growing crops to provide food for seed-eating farmland birds in winter. *Aspects of Applied Biology* 67: 229-236.

Black Grouse and conflict of agri-environment schemes in the uplands

A number of authors presented data from studies of upland farming systems. Baines *et al.* (2002) looked at the impact of reduced grazing intensity on Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* and other bird species in upland Durham. This change in management is covered by the 'Regenerating Suppressed Heather Moor' prescription of the Countryside Stewardship scheme. While the number of lekking male Black Grouse increased by 4.6% per annum in plots with reduced grazing, they declined by 1.7% in control plots. Breeding success was also higher in plots with reduced grazing. This increase in Black Grouse was, however, counterbalanced by declines in

breeding waders (ten-fold decreases in Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus*) and Grey Partridges *Perdix perdix*, proving this to be an example of an agri-environment measure that may be good for some species but poor for others. Careful planning and application of site-specific multi-prescription Countryside Stewardship agreements at the correct spatial scale are, therefore, required to provide suitable conditions for a range of bird species.

Baines, D., Warren, P., & Calladine, J. 2002. Spatial and temporal differences in the abundance of Black Grouse and other moorland birds in relation to reductions in sheep grazing. *Aspects of Applied Biology* 67: 245-252.

The volume *Birds and Agriculture* is available from: The AAB Office, c/o Horticulture Research International, Wellesbourne, Warwick CV35 9EF. Alternatively, visit the AAB website at www.aab.org.uk

Letters

The egg of the Slender-billed Curlew at The Manchester Museum: a unique specimen?

Gretton *et al.* (2002) provided a detailed history of the discovery of the nesting grounds of the Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* by V. E. Ushakov, at Tara, in the valley of the Irtysh River, Russia, in or before 1908. This note provides some additional background information on the egg collected by Ushakov on 2nd June 1909, now housed in the Henry Dresser collection at The Manchester Museum.

Henry Dresser (1838-1915) was one of the most prominent ornithologists in Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and is best remembered for producing large folio works, including *A History of the Birds of Europe* (Dresser 1871-1896, 1902-1903, 1905-1910). Dresser's collection of approximately 10,000 bird skins was purchased by an anonymous benefactor in 1899 and generously donated to The Manchester Museum (Anon 1899). His egg collection and private library were housed in the museum from 1912 (Anon 1912), and were bequeathed to the museum on his death in 1915. The collection contains specimens acquired by many of the most notable of nineteenth and early twentieth century collectors. There is also a small archive of papers, letters and photographs; Dresser's private library, however, is now housed in the Special Collections of the John Rylands University Library, Manchester. The collection of eggs and skins was catalogued on to an electronic database in the 1990s, which can be accessed on The Manchester Museum website (www.museum.man.ac.uk).

Dresser corresponded regularly with other notable ornithologists, often in their own language. His main correspondent in Russia was Sergius Alexandreevich Buturlin, famous for the discovery, in 1905, of numbers of Ross's Gulls *Rhodostethia rosea* breeding in the Kolyma Delta, Russia. Buturlin sent a number of specimens to Dresser (Dresser 1906; McGhie & Logunov, in prep.), and acted as an intermediary between Dresser and a number of other Russian ornithologists, including Ushakov. Dresser's plate for the genus *Numenius* was issued with parts 19-20 of *The Eggs of the Birds of Europe*, in September 1909, and does not include Slender-billed Curlew. The text for the curlews was issued with parts 21-22, in February 1910, and

does include Slender-billed Curlew, so presumably Dresser received the information between the periods of production of these sections. Buturlin appears to have translated Ushakov's 1909 account of the discovery of the breeding grounds for Dresser (see Dresser 1910), and he is commended for producing 'the true facts... concerning *Numenius tenuirostris* and its breeding range' (Anon 1910). The eggs of the species were illustrated for the first time, together with a number of newly discovered eggs of other species, in an appendix plate issued with parts 23-24, in November 1910. The egg in The Manchester Museum is pictured together with an egg collected by Schastovski at Lake Tschany (Lake Chany) on 20th May 1909, and recorded as being in Tomsk Museum. This would appear to be the only time that eggs of this species have ever been illustrated.



224. Eggs of Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*. Egg collected by Ushakov on 2nd June 1909 and now in The Manchester Museum (bottom left). Egg collected by Schastovski on 20th May 1909 (bottom right).

Plate reproduced from Dresser 1910.

The egg collected by Ushakov still resides in the collections in The Manchester Museum (although, at the time of writing, it is temporarily unavailable as a result of redevelopment at the museum). The appendix plate from Dresser's book is reproduced here (plate 224); this shows the egg collected by Ushakov at the bottom left, and that collected by Schastovski at the bottom right. The plate was produced from photographs of the eggs printed using the 'three colour process' (see Dresser 1902). It is not known whether Schastovski's specimen still resides in the Tomsk Museum. Similarly, the whereabouts of a clutch of four eggs sold by Ushakov to a Mr Potter in 1909 or 1910 are unknown (Gretton *et al.* 2002). In light of these facts, the specimen in The Manchester Museum may well be the only one in existence. It is to be hoped that the Slender-billed Curlew will somehow manage a turnaround from imminent extinction, but failing this the Manchester specimen will remain a fragile piece of evidence of the former breeding of this enigmatic species, and a precious piece of natural heritage for future generations.

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I am grateful to John Rylands University Library, Deansgate, Manchester, for allowing me to reproduce the plate from Dresser's book, and to Adam Gretton for much useful discussion and for reading a draft of this note.

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Lower case lunacy

My irritation at seeing bird names printed in lower case has gradually evolved into outright fury, to the point where I have to do something about it. I hope, therefore, that this is going to be the start of a campaign for sanity in the writing and printing of species names.

The most obvious culprits are newspapers and non-specialised journals, which is no surprise because there is no real reason for them to care either way. But those who are involved with natural history *should* care, and it is infuriating to find that some natural history publications, such as *BBC Wildlife Magazine* and *Natural World*, blindly follow the Philistines. Most prominent among them is the RSPB, in their magazine *Birds*. They did not always sin in this way. The *RSPB Guide to British Birds* by David Saunders, published in 1975, correctly uses initial capitals for the species names. Why change? If it ain't broke, don't fix it. 'Fixing', of course, so often leads to disaster, as in this case.

To be fair to the RSPB, they did try to justify their use of lower case and corresponded with me perfectly openly about it. Yet I find it incom-

prehensible that anyone would want to change from a method used successfully for years to one beset with problems. The reasons they gave for doing so, all of them highly subjective, are revealing. They state that: 'We consider the use of lower case for bird names is more modern and less intrusive, particularly when many birds are mentioned together in a sentence.' Being 'modern' is not in itself a good reason for doing something and is inherently dangerous since, by definition, today's 'modern' is tomorrow's 'passé'. 'Less intrusive' is surely perverse. Who wants bird names to be less intrusive in a bird magazine? I want to be able to scan a page and have the bird names jump out at me.

The RSPB continue in defence of their use of lower case: 'Our belief is that...the reader's eye is trained to stop at capital letters.' There is no justification for such an assertion; the reader's eye is not trained in the sense that it is formally taught. My eye is accustomed to seeing a capital at the beginning of a sentence. Far from stopping at the capital, my eye starts there and keeps going. This is a self-defeating point because, as

we shall see, there are capital letters in some of their bird names.

Furthermore, they claim that: 'the scientific community is gradually adopting the same approach'. Simply because everyone else does it has never been a good reason to change, even if it were true. And in this case it is not true. I cannot list all the organisations that hold to initial capitals, but they include: The British Museum of Natural History, the British Ornithologists' Union (including *Ibis*), the BTO (including *Bird Study*), most of the mainstream birding periodicals, including *British Birds*, *Birdwatch*, *Dutch Birding* and *Birding World*, and bird books from the key natural history publishers.

Species names often consist of one or more adjectives plus a noun. In many cases the adjective is simple, being one of size or colour, for example Little Owl *Athene noctua* or Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*. In lower case, even these can lead to confusion. When is 'little' part of a species name and when is it just another way of saying 'small'? How are readers supposed to know, especially if they are not experienced birdwatchers? The RSPB's response to this point more or less concedes the argument (albeit unintentionally): 'We agree with you that occasionally the use of lower case could cause confusion, as with "little gull", but we try to avoid problems by clear sentence construction.' If lower case were viable, it would stand up in all circumstances; clearly it does not. Why should editors have to fiddle about with sentence construction just to serve the god of lower case? And what about the rest of us who are not blessed with such magical editorial powers? When initial capitals are used, these problems disappear.

There are many examples of birds on the British List where the adjective in lower case must pose difficulties for the inexperienced reader: Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca*, Sociable Lapwing *Vauellus gregarius*, Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*, Elegant Tern *Sterna elegans*, Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica*, Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* etc. A favourite of mine is 'aquatic warbler' (a warbler that goes in water?) and how about 'green warbler', 'greenish warbler' and 'two-barred greenish warbler' all appearing in the same sentence? Another example is the regular misunderstanding affecting wagtail identification for beginners. They are told that a wagtail with yellow confined

to the undertail coverts is a Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*. In lower case, it would not be wrong for them to say 'yellow wagtail', meaning a wagtail with yellow on it. Confusion reigns.

Capitals do sometimes occur in the middle of a list of bird names in lower case, when the adjective is, or is based upon, the name of a person or place, for example Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides* or Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea*. This only adds to the confusion and is a pathetic attempt at correctness. Take Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*. A sandwich is a common food item, but Sandwich is also a small town on the east coast of Kent. To know whether small 's' or capital 'S' should be used, you need to know how the name was derived; and how many people will go to that trouble? Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* explores even greater subtleties. Princess Isabella of Spain achieved notoriety by remaining unwashed and wearing the same pale linen clothing for several years thus acquiring an 'attractive' brownish-yellow appearance. So 'isabelline' is a colour, but it is based on a person's name. What now? Remote and unusual place names lie in wait for the unsuspecting, with the result that Pechora Pipit *Authus gustavi* and Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* have been incorrectly shown in lower case. What a mess!

Another reason given by the RSPB was that the dictionaries printed words such as 'black-bird', 'robin' etc. in lower case. That may be so, but *Oxford English Grammar* (Greenbaum, 1996) states that: 'Proper nouns name specific people, animals etc. They have a unique reference and in writing they begin with a capital letter.' Birds are animals and specific means 'species of' so that is almost conclusive. The term 'unique reference' gets right to the heart of the matter. Each bird species has its individual characters, of structure, plumage, voice and so on. They have a unique reference, which entitles them to equal status with people and places. Their names are proper nouns in accordance with the OEG definition.

To those who insist on continuing to use lower case for species names, we need a more logical and cogent explanation than 'it's modern' or 'it looks better'. The subject deserves more than the foppish following of fashion. To those who use initial capitals, please make your voices heard; for the sake of the birds, win this argument!

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News and comment

Compiled by Bob Scott and Adrian Pitches

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of *British Birds*

Cornwall chough-ed to bits

A pair of Red-billed Choughs *Pyrhonorax pyrrhonorax* has successfully nested in England, at a site in west Cornwall, for the first time in 50 years. The news has delighted conservationists, especially in Cornwall where the chough features on the county's coat of arms. The adults, which were first seen in Cornwall last summer, were probably blown across the English Channel from the small population in Brittany. Owing to fears of persecution, the birds have been protected by a round-the-clock watch by RSPB staff and local volunteers. The success of that operation was evident in early May, when four chicks hatched.

Red-billed Choughs forage on grassy clifftops grazed by cattle, and

their gradual population decline during the last century has been attributed to the reduction of clifftop grazing, and more intensive farming methods. The successful breeding this year crowns nearly ten years' hard work by the Cornwall Chough Project (a partnership between the RSPB, The National Trust, English Nature and the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) to provide suitable areas for nesting and feeding. This has been achieved through agreements with local landowners, and farmers managing their land for nature conservation, supported in some areas by DEFRA's Countryside Stewardship Schemes.

As they reach the critical fledgling

stage, the chicks' future is still uncertain. There is, however, an air of cautious optimism that this could be the species' first step on the long road to the recolonisation of England. The partnership is now looking for long-term funding to support a project officer who will work with landowners to ensure that further sites are prepared. The funding partners of the Project would like to acknowledge the considerable help provided from local people and volunteers, who watched over the nesting location to prevent disturbance and ward off egg collectors.

A paper on the Red-billed Chough in southwest England is in preparation for *British Birds*.

Changes at SOC

The SOC (Scottish Ornithologists' Club) is currently undergoing a period of rapid change under the presidency of Ian Andrews. The prestigious home of the Club for almost 43 years, at 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh, has been sold and the SOC is now based in temporary offices at Harbour Point, Newhailes Road, Musselburgh EH21 6SJ, just 200 m from the sea. The search is now actively underway for a new Scottish Centre for Ornithology, and the intention is to move to a site which birders from all parts of Scotland, and indeed the rest of the UK, will want to visit. The new centre will house the SOC Library, the largest collection of ornithological books and journals in Scotland. The library is currently in storage, although the receipt and exchange of books and journals continues under the guidance of the Librarian, John Davies.

As well as the move, there are a number of other changes underway within the SOC, most notably a review of the Club's publications, which include the journal *Scottish Birds* and the annual *Scottish Bird Report*. Links to the Club's 14 branches and the local bird-recording network in Scotland are being strengthened. Following the departure of the long-serving Secretary, Sylvia Laing, in April last year, two staff appointments have been made. The SOC now has a Development Manager, Bill Gardner (formerly the driving force behind the Scottish Seabird Centre in North Berwick), and an Administration Officer, Caroline Scott. It is Bill and Caroline who will field most of the calls to the office and who will handle queries and membership applications. The post of Secretary is now an honorary post and is currently held by Russell Young. Applications for membership (£20 per year) should be made to the office at Harbour Point. (Contributed by Mark Holling, SOC Vice-President)

Migration through the Strait of Gibraltar – autumn help 2002

The Strait of Gibraltar is one of the most important migration 'bottle-necks' in central and western Europe. Only 14 km wide, the Strait makes this area particularly important for soaring birds, which, during autumn migration, may concentrate in hundreds of thousands in the area of Tarifa, waiting for suitable weather conditions to allow the crossing to Africa. The Regional Government of Andalucía (Consejería de Medio Ambiente, Junta de Andalucía) has been funding the monitoring of the autumn migration since 1997. This is the first phase of what will be a complete long-term monitoring scheme of bird migration through the Strait of Gibraltar (Programa MIGRES). Co-ordination of the fieldwork is carried out by SEO/BirdLife (Sociedad Española de Ornitología), the Spanish partner of BirdLife International.

Between mid July and mid November, observation points are established along the Spanish migration front and volunteers are required to man them for several hours each day. The organisers request a minimum stay of 14 days.

Volunteers will be selected according to their experience and availability. Subsistence and accommodation expenses will be fully covered but a small registration fee must be paid. Further details from Programa MIGRES, Centro de Visitantes 'Huerta Grande', Ctra. N-340, El Pelayo, 11390 Algeciras (Cádiz), Spain; tel/fax: +34 956 67 91 58; e-mail: p.migres@teleline.es

Great Snipe on the hard shoulder

Birders travelling to see the lek of Great Snipe *Gallinago media* on the Biebrza marshes in northeast Poland will be able to get there more quickly in future because the European Union is backing plans for a four-lane motorway through the national park. The wetlands of Biebrza, Poland's largest national park, are also a stronghold for the globally threatened Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* and Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*. But they lie on the route of the proposed Via Baltica, which will link the Baltic republics with central Europe, a vital link in the EU's plan for continuous motorway from western Ireland to eastern Finland.

A few years ago, the Via Baltica was set to pass, uncontroversially, to the west of the national park. This route meant avoiding Bialystok, the regional capital but, following powerful lobbying, the previous Polish Government agreed that the route should go via Bialystok, cutting across the Biebrza national park and some of Europe's last remaining primeval forests at Augustowka and Knyszynska.

One solution proposed by pro-motorway civic leaders is to redefine the national park, removing the controversial section from legal protection. The park's director, Adam Sienko, is appalled: 'To start removing protection is an unbelievably dangerous precedent. Fragmentation destroys habitats. This area is of unparalleled national and international significance. There have been 280 species of bird recorded, 160 of which breed [in the park]. Fifty species are on BirdLife International's list of birds with high-priority conservation status. It's the only breeding ground of some species. The forests in this region are the last migratory corridors of bear, wolf and lynx from Russia towards the West. These species will not survive if they cannot disperse.'

According to Zoltan Walinszky, funded by the RSPB to work on the effect of Poland joining the EU on its wildlife, the EU's role is very contradictory. 'On one hand it insists accession countries draw up a list of Natura 2000 sites which would guarantee protection to the most important areas before entry into the European Union. On the other, it is promoting a transport network which takes no account of these areas.'

Read more at www.observer.co.uk/international/story/0,6903,718436,00.html

English Nature and Hen Harriers

The fact that the Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* is Britain's most persecuted bird of prey is well known, and regularly reported upon in the birding press (see *Brit. Birds* 94: 552). The conservation bodies seem to be unable to prevent the totally illegal slaughter of adult birds, and destruction of nests, eggs and young that takes place each year. This is not altogether surprising in view of the fact that so many of the potential breeding sites are on isolated moors well away from prying eyes. English Nature has launched a project in northern England with the aim of ensuring the species' survival. The three key tasks of the project are to:

- Monitor the remaining English Hen Harrier population and its

breeding success. (This will require the co-operation of landowners and their staff.)

- Identify the factors which are currently restricting Hen Harrier numbers. (This is probably well known and we can all make an educated guess.)
- Take subsequent measures to increase the Hen Harrier population in England. (This needs to be done sooner rather than later.)

As part of the survey, English Nature would like to hear from anyone who has seen Hen Harriers in England this spring and summer. Please phone Richard Saunders, Hen Harrier Project Officer, English Nature Cumbria Team on 01539 792800.

Italian hunters outside the EU

Why were we not surprised when this piece of news appeared in the *BirdLife in Europe* newsletter? There is a growing trend among Italian hunters to travel outside the EU to hunt birds. It is reported that more than 100,000 hunters visit eastern Europe, the Balkans and North Africa every year, where hunted species can include some that are globally threatened. The starting point is perhaps the good news that, thanks to the EU Birds Directive, the number of hunters operating in Italy has fallen significantly over the past 20 years, from five million to 800,000. Law enforcement outside the EU is much weaker, thus encouraging a wider area of interest. Recent evidence from police operations in Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovenia and Italy itself indicates that people operating on the hunting grounds are (for a price) prepared to assist with smuggling and the preparation of false documents.

Since 1996, police forces have confiscated a total of 180,000 dead birds (probably a drop in the ocean compared with the true total) of 106 species. These have included Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* (50), Corn Crane *Crex crex* (40), White Wagtail *Motacilla alba alba* (1,522), Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis* (60,000), *Streptopelia* doves (10,000), pipits *Anthus* (61,000), and *Phylloscopus* warblers (162). The latest police operation in Hungary, in October 2001, resulted in 11,758 dead birds being seized at the border on their way to Italy. This was followed a few days later by a police raid in Italy which led to the largest ever seizure of birds in Europe, including 120,000 birds from the former Yugoslavia.

So what can we do to help? We can give maximum support for BirdLife International (www.birdlife.net) and provide help in Italy through the Birdlife Partner LIPU (e-mail: lipusede@box1.tin.it).

Vandals wreck East Anglian seabird colony

Mindless vandals have wrecked Britain's largest colony of Little Terns *Sterna albifrons*, at Great Yarmouth, Norfolk. The attack, which took place late on Friday 31st May, caused around two-thirds of the 98 pairs of terns to

desert their nests, leaving their eggs to perish. The criminals broke down a perimeter fence before uprooting an electric fox-proof fence and throwing the fence posts into the middle of the colony, destroying nests in the process. The

Norfolk Constabulary has appealed for anyone with information about the attack to call them immediately on 01953 424242 or to call Crimestoppers (anonymously) on 0800 555111.

Obituary

Major Robert F. Rutledge, MC (1899-2002)

Major Robert (Robin) Rutledge was the doyen of Irish ornithology for half a century. He died peacefully in his beloved Co. Galway on 13th January 2002, at the great age of 102. He must have been one of very few people on this planet whose life spanned three centuries. During that time, from his teenage years right up to his death, he had an unflagging enthusiasm for birds, particularly those in Ireland. He published his first paper, on the birds of Lough Carra (Co. Mayo), in the *Irish Naturalist* at the age of 16, and during the rest of his long and productive life he added over 100 papers, notes, reports and books to his list. *The Birds of Ireland*, which he co-authored with Father P. G. Kennedy and Colonel C. F. Scroope, published in 1954, was the first definitive work on the status and distribution of Irish birds since the similar works of Ussher and Warren in 1900 and Thompson in 1850. The enormous growth of interest in birds, and the resulting increase in bird records, led Robin Rutledge to establish the annual *Irish Bird Report* in 1953, which he edited for 19 years. This report is now incorporated in the annual journal *Irish Birds*.

In 1950, little was known about the movements and migrations of Irish birds, both because of the lack of observations and because rather little bird ringing had been done in Ireland during the first half of the twentieth century. Robin recognised this deficiency, and set up Ireland's first bird observatory on Great Saltee Island, off the south-east coast. This turned out to be an

excellent choice of location, being at the main point of entry and exit of birds on spring and autumn migration. The observatory operated from 1950 to 1963 and added greatly to our knowledge of bird migration in Ireland. In recognition of his bird-observatory work, Robin was awarded the BTO's Bernard Tucker Medal in 1961. Later, in recognition of his numerous publications, Dublin University awarded him an honorary doctorate of science.

By the 1960s Robin Rutledge's interests had evolved from simply studying and recording the status, distribution and migration of Irish birds to a growing concern for their conservation. He joined enthusiastically with a few others in the founding of the Irish Wildfowl Committee, which later became BirdWatch Ireland. He was largely responsible for persuading government to establish the Wexford Wildfowl Refuge on the

North Slob, principally to secure and manage the lands for his beloved Greenland White-fronted Geese *Anser albifrons flavirostris*. He was also responsible for setting up the annual census of light-bellied Brent Geese *Branta bernicla hrota*, almost the entire northeast Canadian population of which winters in Ireland. This project, now under the auspices of the Irish Wetland Bird Survey, is still running after more than 40 years.

As Robin Rutledge moved on into old age and became less active, his great contribution to Irish ornithology was marked by Bird-Watch Ireland naming their headquarters Rutledge House in his honour. While he became physically frail in his last years, his mind was as alert as ever and his enthusiasm for birds never waned. Many ornithologists of my generation will fondly remember, and with thanks, the infectious enthusiasm and encouragement that we received from this kindly man.

Oscar J. Merne



225. Major R. F. Rutledge, in 1998.

Oran O'Sullivan

Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary of unchecked reports covers mid May to mid June 2002.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* Arundel WWT Reserve (West Sussex), 19th May. **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* South Walney (Cumbria), 6th-9th June. **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* Catcott Lows (Somerset), 23rd-27th May. **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* Newport (Essex), 15th May; Whitchurch (Hampshire), 17th May; Spean Bridge (Highland), 18th May; Great Ryburgh (Norfolk), 25th-30th May; near Aucharnie (northeast Scotland), 27th May; Dungeness (Kent), 31st May; near Ware (Hertfordshire), 4th June.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* St Mary's (Scilly), 13th-26th May. **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* Berney Marshes (Norfolk), 14th May; Fen Drayton (Cambridgeshire), 18th-19th May; North Duffield Carrs (North Yorkshire), 19th May; Salthouse Heath (Norfolk), 19th May; Hickling Broad (Norfolk), 22nd-23rd May; between Higham and Stratford St Mary (Suffolk), 22nd May; Upton Fen (Norfolk), 23rd May; Langham (Norfolk), 27th May; Winterton (Norfolk), 2nd June; Cley/Salthouse (Norfolk), 8th June; Eynesbury (Cambridgeshire), 8th June; Caister (Norfolk), 9th June.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Two, Fowlmere (Cambridgeshire), 12th May; four, South Huish Marsh (Devon), 17th-31st May,

with one until 2nd June; long-stayer still at Titchwell (Norfolk). **Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus* Rimac (Lincolnshire), 11th-15th May. **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* Thornham Harbour (Norfolk), 17th May. **Least Sandpiper** *Calidris minutilla* Drayton Bassett (Staffordshire/Warwickshire), 23rd-25th May. **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* Marshside Marsh (Merseyside), 20th May. **Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* Leventhorpe Flash (West Yorkshire), 8th-9th June. **Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* Islay (Argyll), 11th-14th May. **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* Old Hall Marshes (Essex), 16th May; Washington WWT Reserve (Co. Durham), 18th-20th May; Teifi Estuary (Gwynedd/Pembrokeshire), 22nd-25th May; Penclacwydd WWT Reserve (Carmarthenshire), 23rd-24th May; Freiston (Lincolnshire), 31st May. **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* Kilnsea (East Yorkshire), 1st June.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* Heavy passage in the second half of May, including 625 past Balranald (Western Isles) on 25th May. **Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus* 450 past Balranald, 25th May. **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* Loch of Tingwall (Shetland), 13th-28th May. **Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica* Ythan Estuary (northeast Scotland), 19th May. **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* Hickling/Rockland/Filby Broad area (Norfolk), 12th-14th May. **Elegant Tern** *Sterna elegans* Dawlish Warren



226. Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, St Mary's, Scilly, May 2002.



227. Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, St Mary's, Scilly, May 2002.



Iain Leach

228. Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*, Rimac, Lincolnshire, May 2002.



Gary Bellingham

229. Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*, Rimac, Lincolnshire, May 2002.



Gary Bellingham

230. Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*, Drayton Bassett, Staffordshire, May 2002.

(Devon), 18th May. **Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus* Lakenheath Fen (Suffolk/Norfolk), 16th May; Pennington Flash (Greater Manchester), 21st-29th May. **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* Lewis (Western Isles), 12th-18th May; Swale NNR (Kent), 2nd June.

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* St Margarets-at-Cliffe (Kent), 17th May; Dun Laoghaire (Co. Dublin), 18th May; Weymouth (Dorset), 18th May; Grove Ferry (Kent), 19th May; Sennen Cove (Cornwall), 2nd June; Landguard (Suffolk), 6th June; Hartlepool/Seaton Carew (Cleveland), 9th June. **Little Swift** *Apus affinis* St Mary's, 17th May. **European Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster* Two, St Erith (Cornwall), 12th May; two, Lundy (Devon), 16th May; Beachy Head (East Sussex), 19th May; St Agnes and Gugh (Scilly), 27th May; Flamborough Head (East Yorkshire), 28th May; Wimblyington Fen (Cambridgeshire), 29th May; Witchampton (Dorset), 30th May; St Margarets-at-Cliffe, 31st May; two, Spurn (East Yorkshire), 1st June; two, Bishop Middleham Quarry (Co. Durham), 2nd-9th June; Ponden Reservoir (West Yorkshire), 6th-7th June; Portland (Dorset), 8th June. **European Roller** *Coccyzus ganulus* Titchwell, 16th May.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* Waxham (Norfolk), 12th May; Dungeness, 19th May and 25th May; Salthouse Heath, 24th May; near Harlow (Essex), 28th-29th May. **Red-throated**



Gary Bellingham

231. Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*, Towyd, Conwy, May 2002.

Pipit *Anthus cervinus* Fair Isle (Shetland), 16th May; Bardsey (Gwynedd), 31st May. **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* Marazion (Cornwall), 16th-20th May.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* Isle of May (Fife), 11th-12th May; Fair Isle, 12th May. **Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* Skomer (Pembrokeshire), 16th May; Frensham Little Pond (Surrey), 18th May to 9th June; Haroldswick, Unst (Shetland), 29th May; Radipole Lake (Dorset), 31st May; Grove Ferry, 7th June; Foula (Shetland), 8th June. **Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Isle of May, 7th-8th June. **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* Dawlish Warren, 26th May. **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* St Agnes, 16th-19th May and 27th-31st May; St Martin's (Scilly), 17th-19th May and 2nd June; St Mary's, 17th-24th May; Treco (Scilly), 17th May; Cosmeston Lakes Country Park (Glamorgan), 19th May; Bryher (Scilly), 24th May and 30th May; Tumble (Carmarthenshire), 3rd-7th June; Dawlish Warren, 4th June; Mizen Head (Co. Cork), 3rd-5th June; Caerthillian Cove (Cornwall), 6th-9th June. **Rosy Starling** *Sturnus*



Bill Baston

232. Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*, Weybourne, Norfolk, June 2002.



George Reszeter

233. Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*, Frensham Little Pond, Surrey, June 2002.

roseus Porthgwarra (Cornwall), 31st May; three, Brean Down (Somerset), 2nd June; Hook Head (Co. Wexford), 2nd June; Lundy, 2nd June; Old Hunstanston (Norfolk), 2nd-3rd June; Padstow (Cornwall), 2nd June; Bridlington (East Yorkshire), 3rd June; Cumnock (Ayrshire), 3rd June; Skokholm (Pembrokeshire), 3rd June; Robin Hood's Bay (North Yorkshire), 4th June; St Agnes, 4th June; Sanday (Orkney), 4th June; South Huish Marsh, 4th-9th June; two, Gullane (Lothian), 5th June with one to 9th June; Portland, 5th-6th June with two 7th-9th June; Swanage (Dorset), 5th June; Fetlar (Shetland), 7th June; Llandudno (Conwy), 7th-9th June at least; four, Braunton Burrows (Devon), 8th June; Robert's Cove (Co. Cork), 8th June; South Gare (Cleveland), 8th June; Tiree (Argyll), 8th-9th June; Erskine (Renfrewshire), 9th June; South Uist (Western Isles), 9th June; Stiffkey (Norfolk), 9th June.

Recent BBRC decisions

This regular listing of the most recent decisions by the British Birds Rarities Committee is not intended to be comprehensive or in any way to replace the annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain'. The records listed are mostly those of the rarest species, or those of special interest for other reasons. All records refer to 2001 unless stated otherwise.

Accepted: Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* Brow Marsh (Shetland), 8th-15th September. Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* Hanningfield Reservoir (Essex), 30th December. Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* Coatham Marsh (Cleveland), 27th-29th September. Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* Eoligarry, Barra (Outer Hebrides), 29th September, 8th October; Ardivachar Point, South Uist (Outer Hebrides), 22nd October. Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* Castlehills (Caithness), 22nd-26th December. Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* Meikle Loch and Loch of Strathbeg (northeast Scotland), 27th-30th June; Willen Lake (Buckinghamshire), 29th-31st October. Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* Kent-

mere Valley (Cumbria), 14th September. Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica* St Mary's and St Martin's (Scilly), 28th-29th October. Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* Porthgain (Pembrokeshire), 5th-7th October; West Runton and Cromer (Norfolk), 20th October; Filey (North Yorkshire), 24th October. Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* Landguard (Suffolk), 21st September. Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* St Mary's (Scilly), 14th-18th October. Grey-checked Thrush *Catharus minimus* Stromness (Orkney), 14th-16th October. Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* St Kilda (Outer Hebrides), 1st-2nd October. Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* Fair Isle (Shetland), 14th-17th

April. Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* Fair Isle (Shetland), 13th-17th May; Woodwalton Fen (Cambridgeshire), 23rd-27th December. Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* Fair Isle (Shetland), 5th-9th July; Spiggie (Shetland), 22nd July. Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus* Lundy (Devon), 6th-9th October; St Martin's (Scilly) 13th-14th October. Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* Prawle Point (Devon), 9th-15th September; Spurn (East Yorkshire), 27th October.



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Our present compiler, Colin Davies, has been forced to resign from this post by the pressure of other commitments; Colin has done a superb job over the past two years, and has developed a computer database specifically to handle records for the report. We are, therefore, looking to recruit a successor to Colin. Knowledge of and interest in European bird distributions are essential, as is computer literacy (as well as using the database, most of the data arrive by e-mail). BB will provide the necessary back-up services, and will refund any expenses incurred, but the work is unpaid. Anyone interested in taking responsibility for this fascinating task should contact Roger Riddington by e-mail at editor@britishbirds.co.uk

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COMMENT –

A written constitution for species-level taxonomy

Martin Collinson

The recent publication of 'Guidelines for assigning species rank', by the Taxonomic Sub-committee (TSC) of the BOURC (Helbig *et al.* 2002), provided a long-awaited 'written constitution' for birders interested in the taxonomic issues surrounding the British List. Some of its main points are summarised here.

Perhaps surprisingly, the TSC has not formally adopted any particular species concept, but has defined two conditions that a taxon (in most cases the taxon being considered will be one currently recognised as a subspecies) must fulfil if it is to be assigned to species rank. These conditions follow most closely the Evolutionary or General Lineage Species Concepts (Mayden 1997; de Queiroz 1999); they will form the practical basis of TSC decisions, and are broadly as follows:

1. Species must be diagnosable: individuals of each taxon must be absolutely distinguishable from individuals in all other taxa. The TSC has defined explicit criteria of diagnosability, in order to make such decisions less arbitrary than may have been the case in the past.
2. Species must have diverged sufficiently, so that they are not likely to merge with other (similar) species in the future: they are expected to maintain their genetic and phenotypic integrity.

Showing that these requirements have been fulfilled will be easier for some taxa than for others. This is discussed separately for different biological situations: sympatry (where the ranges of the two taxa are widely overlapping), parapatry (their ranges meet but do not overlap, or do so only slightly) and allopatry (the ranges of the taxa do not meet). If diagnosable sympatric or parapatric taxa do not

hybridise, or do so only very rarely, then it is reasonable to assume that they will not merge again in the future, as full reproductive isolation is unlikely to be reversed. Following the Guidelines, such taxa would normally be treated as separate species. Hybrid zones are treated separately: if there are partially sympatric or parapatric taxa which hybridise regularly, and form a stable hybrid zone, then it is likely that selection against hybrids will restrict gene flow and keep the two taxa separate. In those cases, the taxa can be split, but they may be designated as 'semispecies' to show that there is still some gene flow between them. It is important to note the difference between hybrid zones (within which a sample of birds from any one location will contain individuals of both parent taxa, and every sort of intermediate) and clines (a smooth gradation of characteristics across the range). When two distinct subspecies are linked by a broad cline, it is possible that the only restriction to gene flow between the subspecies is the considerable geographical distance separating individuals at either end of the range. In these cases, not only are the taxa not fully diagnosable, but it cannot be shown (or presumed) that they will retain their separate integrities in the future. Consequently, taxa which are connected by a smooth cline will not normally be split under the Guidelines, even if the individuals at either end of the cline are diagnosably distinct.

The situations which are often the most difficult and controversial are those pertaining to closely related allopatric taxa, for example the two races of Common Scoter, *Melanitta nigra nigra* and *M. n. americana* ('Black Scoter'). The TSC has chosen to accept that criterion 2 (above) has been fulfilled if two or more allopatric taxa are fully diagnosable in each of several functionally independent characters (e.g. plumage features, biometric measurements



Robin Chittenden

234. Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra nigra*, Norfolk, April 1999.

and behaviour), such that the differences between the two taxa are as great as might be found between closely related sympatric species. It is also recognised that there are distinctive allopatric taxa that do not fulfil this requirement. Allopatric species may not always be as distinct from each other as sympatric species, because they do not have to be ecologically separated. As such, those allopatric taxa which are fully diagnosable in one character only, or are only statistically diagnosable on the basis of a combination of two or three characters, may also be treated as species (or 'allospecies', as in Shirihai *et al.* 2001).

What might this mean for the British List?

The Guidelines imply that species-level taxonomic decisions will be taken using defined criteria which are more stringent than under the Phylogenetic Species Concept, because trivial diagnostic differences will not be used to define allopatric species. Nonetheless, the burden of proof sometimes required under the Biological

Species Concept (evidence of full reproductive isolation between taxa) will not necessarily be adopted. It is, therefore, unlikely that dozens of additional species will be recognised in the short term, but new splits are inevitable as we start to get beyond dogma and begin to ask the right questions about some of the 'subspecies' on the British List.

The author is a member of the TSC, but the views expressed are, of course, his own.

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Satellite-tracked Lesser Spotted Eagle avoids crossing water at the Gulf of Suez

*Bernd-U. Meyburg, Joachim Matthes and
Christiane Meyburg*



ABSTRACT To date, most of the Lesser Spotted Eagles *Aquila pomarina* that we have tracked by satellite telemetry migrated in autumn along a direct route from Israel to Africa, via Suez (Egypt). In both 1997 and 1998, however, one adult female was tracked to the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula, and from there flew north again to Suez. Only one other adult eagle is known to have flown south over the Sinai Peninsula, but from there crossed the Gulf of Suez. The possible reasons for this behaviour, involving a 500-km detour and a flight of about three and a half days, are discussed.

The migratory pathways of most birds are influenced by oceans, lakes and even rivers, but raptors in particular have been characterised as reluctant to cross water barriers. Few studies have been conducted on the behaviour of migrating raptors when crossing water bodies (e.g. Kerlinger 1985). Like many other large birds of prey, Lesser Spotted Eagles *Aquila pomarina* use gliding flight for migration, which depends on rising thermals of warm air, and avoid crossing open sea as much as possible. For many years, Lesser Spotted Eagles have been counted at points of concentration such as the Bosphorus (Turkey), but the extent to which they avoid narrow sea crossings and, if necessary, circumvent them has not so far been studied. With satellite telemetry, this is now possible, and the migration routes of larger raptors can be more accurately tracked. Shirihai *et al.* (2000) confirm that little is known about Lesser Spotted Eagle 'route behaviour' in the Sinai Peninsula, and here we describe in detail the surprising autumn route of one individual in 1997 and 1998.

Methods

An adult female Lesser Spotted Eagle was trapped near the nest in northern Germany on

6th June 1997, and fitted with a solar-powered satellite transmitter weighing 35 g. This was programmed so that, given sufficient light, it could send signals continuously. We received regular co-ordinates from this transmitter until 27th January 1999. For technical details of satellite telemetry, and the results obtained to date for Lesser Spotted Eagle, see Meyburg *et al.* (1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1996, 2000, 2001).

Results

By mid October 1997, the bird had reached the Middle East, spending the night of 11th-12th October about 22 km northeast of Nāblus (32°23'N, 35°22'E; see fig. 1). On 12th October, in spite of a headwind, it flew c. 303 km through Palestine, Israel and Egypt to reach the central part of Sinai, c. 110 km ENE of Suez (30°10'N, 33°40'E). This was the longest confirmed daily migration distance between 34°N and 27°N. On 13th October, it continued southwest to arrive at the east coast of the Gulf of Suez around midday, some 50 km southeast of Suez, and then followed the coastline southeast. After spending the night of 13th-14th October about 100 km southeast of Suez (29°13'N, 33°07'E), it flew 167 km parallel with the coast on 14th October, reaching the southern point of

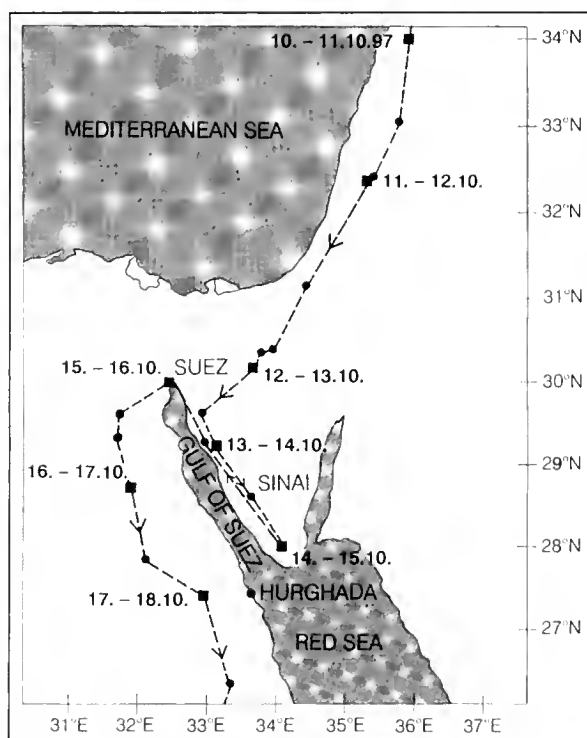


Fig. 1. Daily flight distances covered by a satellite-tracked Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*, during 11th-18th October 1997, showing overnight stops (squares) and daytime locations (circles).

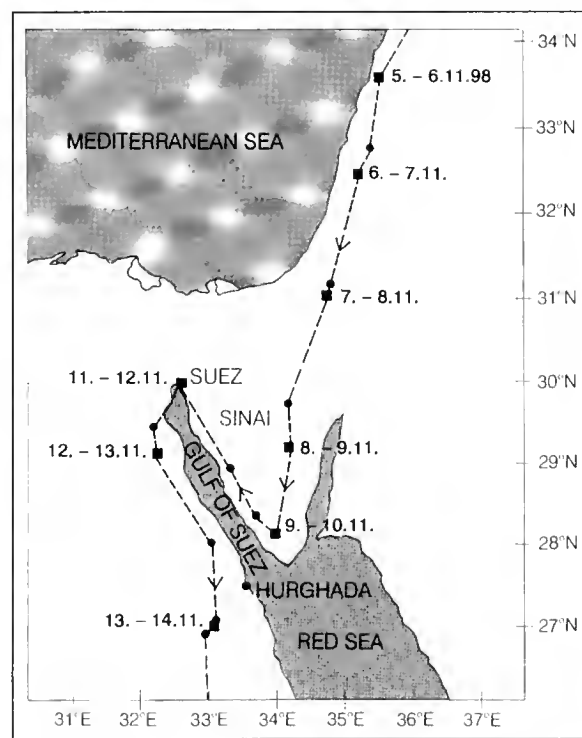


Fig. 2. Daily flight distances covered by a satellite-tracked Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*, during 5th-14th November 1998, showing overnight stops (squares) and daytime locations (circles).

235. (Left) Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*, northern Germany. B.-U. Meyburg

B. U. Meyburg



236. Meadow landscape, northern Germany. Typical hunting habitat for Lesser Spotted Eagles *Aquila pomarina*.

B. U. Meyburg



237. Adult female Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*, with half grown nestling, Eastern Slovakia, July 1968

the Sinai Peninsula. From here, it changed direction abruptly. On 15th October, it flew 280 km northwest along the coast and at 12.57 hrs (local time) it was more or less at the spot where it had passed the previous night. It then spent the night of 15th-16th October 11.5 km west of Suez. From here, it flew southwest over a range of low hills, then along the west side of the range, through the desert to the south. On 16th October it covered 179 km, and continued roughly southwards on 17th October when at 14.00 hrs it had travelled as far south as the southernmost point it reached on the Sinai Peninsula. The daily distance covered by the eagle between latitudes 34°N and 27°N varied between 144 and 303 km, with a mean of 209 km per day.

In spring 1998, on its northward migration, the eagle flew over Suez on 3rd April and continued north. It bred successfully in Germany, at the same site and with the same mate as in the previous year.

During its southward journey in autumn 1998, this individual, astonishingly, repeated the detour to the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula and back north to Suez in order to reach

Africa, flying this time in a straight line from Israel to the south of Sinai (fig. 2). On 6th November it reached the northern border of Israel around midday, and spent the night of 7th-8th November at 31°00'N, 34°42'E. Rather than flying southwest to Suez, it flew SSW until midday on the 8th, then south. On 9th, it arrived in the south of the peninsula, where it spent the night. On 10th November, it flew northwest, following the coast towards Suez. Along the old route of the previous year, it took two days to reach Suez. From here, on 12th-13th November, it followed the coastline, between 20 and 40 km inland, with a direct southward course from 28°N. At about midday on 13th November, it reached the same latitude as the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula, where it had spent the night of 9th-10th November. The daily distance covered between latitudes 34°N and 27°N (determined on six of the eight days), varied between 126 and 265 km; overall, it covered an average of 159 km per day during those eight days.

Discussion

Water barriers are an important selective force shaping the migration pathways of raptors (Kerlinger 1989). Crossings may save considerable time and energy, but migrants risk being lost because of poor weather or fatigue, and very few species make crossings of more than 25 km. The mortality of raptors attempting even short water crossings is relatively well documented (Kerlinger 1985, 1989). For example, more than 1,300 raptors were found dead along one beach in Israel during April 1980, including seven Spotted *A. clanga* or Lesser Spotted Eagles and 124 unidentified *Aquila* eagles (Zu-Aretz & Leshem 1983).

With one exception, all other Lesser Spotted Eagles that we have tracked followed a direct line between Israel and Africa, via Suez. On 5th October 1994, however, a tracked adult male apparently flew from the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula to Hurghada, on the west side of the Gulf of Suez (Meyburg *et al.* 1995a). The reason why the female discussed here did not cross the Gulf from the southern tip of Sinai (66 km wide at this point) remains unclear. The detour via Suez involved an extra 500 km and a



B.-U. Meyburg

238. Adult Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*, with solar-powered satellite transmitter fitted, northern Germany, 7th July 1996.

time loss of up to three and a half days. We assume that it arrived in Sinai on its first autumn migration, possibly by following other species, such as White Storks *Ciconia ciconia*. Presumably it then opted not to risk crossing the Gulf and, having made a successful journey to Africa via Suez, adopted the same route in future years out of tradition, despite the extra distance involved. If adverse weather had prevented it crossing the Gulf, it would presumably have waited until conditions improved, but in both 1997 and 1998, after spending a night at the southern tip of Sinai, it flew northwest towards Suez the following day. Wind direction may have also played some part in the eagle's choice of route. For example, if it had wished to cross the Gulf from Sinai to Hurghada on 15th or 16th October 1997, it would have faced a headwind. Diverting to Suez meant that it had a tailwind instead. Furthermore, it had a tailwind when flying to the southern tip of the Sinai



239. Adult Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*, northern Germany, May 1995. This individual has just returned from its wintering quarters, having been tracked through the winter months with a satellite transmitter (the antenna of which is clearly visible).

Peninsula on 14th October. This does not, however, explain why, on 13th October, it did not fly straight to Suez. In addition, the greatest daily distance covered (303 km) was on a day when the eagle had a headwind.

Large migrant birds tend either to bypass the Gulf of Suez completely (at Suez in the north), or cross it from the southern point of Sinai to Hurghada on the west coast (Bruun 1985). The latter route is used by White Storks (Koch *et al.* 1966; Reed & Lovejoy 1969), although Attum (2000) argued that the majority of storks make the crossing farther northwest, from El Yora to Gebel El Zeita, where the Gulf is substantially narrower. The migration of raptors in autumn is much less well understood (Bijlsma 1987). The majority of vultures and eagles apparently avoid crossing the Gulf of Suez, and make a detour via Suez. Although Grieve (1996) considered that there was little evidence of a major routeway across the Gulf of Suez in autumn, maps in Shirihai *et al.* (2000) suggest that up to 100 Lesser Spotted Eagles may cross the Gulf in spring.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank H. Matthes for helping us to trap this eagle, and R. D. Chancellor for linguistic help. Dr Lutz Bannehr (Berlin Free University) kindly analysed wind speeds and direction, based on satellite data, on the Red Sea during 11th-16th October 1997. This enabled us to assess the possible effects of these factors on migration.

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The Common Buzzard in Britain: a new population estimate

Rob Clements



Robin Prytherch

ABSTRACT During recent years, the Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* has spread eastwards from its former strongholds in western and northern Britain. At the same time, there is evidence that the species is now breeding at a much higher density than previously recorded, largely as a result of consolidation and in-filling in areas of prey-rich farmland habitat. An increase in the Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* population, and a reduction in persecution are both likely to be important contributing factors. This paper summarises recent data on Common Buzzard population densities from survey work in many parts of Britain. A new national population estimate, based on an analysis of the habitats found in its range, suggests that there were between 44,000 and 61,000 territorial pairs in 2001. Consequently, the Common Buzzard is probably now the most abundant diurnal raptor in Britain.

Past population estimates

The first post-war population estimate for the Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* in Britain set the figure at 12,000 breeding pairs (Moore 1957). This was revised downwards, to 8,000-10,000 pairs, after the 1968-72 *Atlas* confirmed that the species continued to be restricted to western

and northern Britain (Tubbs 1974; Sharrock 1976). During the 1980s, a survey by the BTO in 1983 estimated the population to be 12,000-17,000 pairs (Taylor *et al.* 1988). Writing in the 1988-1991 *New Atlas*, Colin Tubbs saw no reason to increase this figure, noting that there had probably been little change since the pre-



240. Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, Tregaron, Wales.

vious *Atlas* (Gibbons *et al.* 1993). Now, the combined evidence of an increased density of territorial pairs in farmland habitats, together with an expansion of the breeding range eastwards, suggests that a new population estimate is appropriate.

Towards a new population estimate

A comparison between recent survey work on the Common Buzzard in Dorset (Kenward *et al.* 2000) and in Shropshire (Sim *et al.* 2001) illustrates the problems in estimating the size of raptor populations. In Dorset, where a population of 234–240 individuals was estimated to occur within a 120-km² study area, only 31 confirmed breeding pairs were found (including an estimated six failed breeding attempts), suggesting that only 25% of the population attempted to breed. By contrast, in a hectad (10-km square) study area in Shropshire, 81 territorial pairs were found, of which 71 pairs bred. Since different studies use different methods, and generate data to answer particular questions, such as breeding productivity, prey species identification, population estimates etc., drawing overall conclusions about breeding density from a number of studies is fraught with difficulty. An estimate of pairs holding territory in suitable habitat in the breeding season will clearly provide a higher figure than the total number of pairs proven to breed successfully.

Furthermore, data from one study area can be interpreted in different ways, leading to wide variations in population estimates. In the Dorset study referred to above, the data could be interpreted as showing only 31 breeding pairs within 120 km² or, alternatively, that perhaps as many as 120 pairs held territory within the same area. Does the Shropshire study indicate that a much greater proportion of the population bred each year, or that the total population was higher, with a similar percentage of non-breeders? In the latter study, which concentrated on breeding and prey-species data, no attempt was made to estimate the total number of individuals involved, so the reasons for the apparent difference must remain unknown. Perhaps the Shropshire study area was still in the process of colonisation, while in Dorset the Common Buzzard population had reached saturation point some time ago, in an area of lower prey resources. The lower percentage of two- and three-year-old buzzards breeding in Dorset compared with an experimentally released population in Sussex supports this theory (Kenward & Walls 2002). Owing to a radio-tracking programme of Common Buzzards in Dorset, it has been possible to estimate the number of birds which are present but not breeding in this study area. This is obviously much harder to do in areas where such tagging has not been carried out. It is possible that a

similarly high percentage of non-breeders may exist in other well-established populations.

A population estimate for any species must first define the unit of population to be used, whether breeding pairs, pairs attempting to breed, pairs holding territory, or individual birds. In this paper, the estimate refers to territorial pairs, since this unit of population is most easily compared between different study areas. To provide a more accurate population estimate than is possible here, survey work in other parts of the Common Buzzard's range will be required. Such work is most likely to provide data concerning territorial pairs, since proof of nesting or confirmed breeding is both time-consuming and may require access to private farmland and woodland. As the above studies show, the percentage of territorial pairs which fail to breed will vary between areas, and probably also between years, as food supply and other variables fluctuate. In a north Somerset study area (see below), the percentage of territorial pairs breeding successfully has shown marked variation, with 41.6% successful in 1998 compared with 67.5% in 2001 (R. Prytherch *in litt*).

Common Buzzard breeding densities in Britain
Table 1 illustrates the wide variation in breeding density of Common Buzzards across different

habitats during the past 30 years. The first five study areas, grouped together as 'farmland', are comprised of predominantly mixed farmland, with 10-30% woodland. The north Somerset and SO37 densities far exceed those recorded in the past, when most surveys took place in traditional upland habitat. The reason for the lower density of breeding buzzards in the Dorset study area is uncertain, but the scarcity of mammal prey on heathland, especially Rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, and also a dearth of earthworms, are likely factors (Graham *et al.* 1995). In the nearby New Forest, Hampshire, the density of breeding buzzards has declined from 11-12 pairs per hectad in the 1970s to 6-7 pairs per hectad in the early 1990s (Clark & Eyre 1993). Again, a deficiency of prey is perhaps the reason for such low densities. In general, the highest concentrations of Common Buzzards occur in areas of mixed farmland and pasture with a substantial proportion of deciduous or mixed woodland – areas with a plentiful supply of prey. A long-term study in north Somerset has shown a steady increase in numbers from 13 pairs in 1982 to 26 pairs in 1991, in a 75-km² study area. By 1996, the total had reached 56 pairs, while in 2001, 84 pairs held territory, equivalent to 111 pairs per hectad (R. Prytherch, verbally). In Shropshire/Herefordshire (SO37), a density of

Table 1. A summary of recorded breeding density in studies of the Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* in Britain.

Study Area	Study period	Territorial density (pairs/hectad)	Breeding density (pairs/hectad)	Altitude (m)	Source
Farmland – recent					
North Somerset (75 km ²)	2001	111	75	0-180	Prytherch 1997/verbally
Bath & northeast Somerset (60 km ²)	2001	78	59	20-210	J. Holmes (verbally)
Shropshire/Herefordshire (SO37)	1994-1996	81	71	120-440	Sim <i>et al.</i> 2001
Worcestershire/Shropshire (SO77)	1994-1996	22	20	20-240	Sim <i>et al.</i> 2001
Dorset (120 km ²)	1996	*	21-26	0-200	Kenward <i>et al.</i> 2000
Farmland/Upland					
Postbridge, Devon (33 km ²)	1990-1993	48-51	33-35	300-500	Dare 1998
Devon (2,620 km ²)	1983	25-33	–	–	Sitters 1988
Cambrian Mountains (475 km ²):					
Farmland	1975-1979	41	–	<330	Newton <i>et al.</i> 1982
Upland	1975-1979	24	–	>330	Newton <i>et al.</i> 1982
Snowdonia (926 km ²)					
	1977-1984	10-11	–	150-1,085	Dare 1995/verbally
	2000	14-15	–	150-1,085	Dare 1995/verbally
Denbigh, Clwyd (440 km ²)	1977-1984	14	–	150-450	Dare 1995
Upper Strathspey (94 km ²)					
	1971	14-15	–	220-500	Halley 1993
	1988-1989	23-24	–	220-500	Halley 1993
* 197-200 individuals					



241. Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, feeding on dead Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus* buck, Strathspey, Highland.

81 pairs per 100 km² was found in similar habitat in 1994-96 (Sim *et al.* 2001). By contrast, in the SO77 study area (Worcestershire/Shropshire), only 22 territorial pairs per hectad were recorded. This area was close to the eastern edge of the Common Buzzard's range in 1991 (indeed, breeding was not confirmed during the 1988-91 *New Atlas*), and these relatively low numbers reflect the recent and probably incomplete colonisation of this area. It seems most probable that reduced persecution and a resurgence in the Rabbit population (Harris *et al.* 1995) are the most important factors underlying the Common Buzzard's success.

The density of buzzards found in the Shropshire and north Somerset study areas may not be representative of the same habitat throughout Britain. For example, in Easter Ross, a density of 30-40 territorial pairs per hectad was estimated for a farmland study area, where continuing persecution was thought to be a limiting factor (R. Swann, verbally). In west Moray, localised concentrations were found in Forestry Commission plantations, but fewer birds were found in adjacent farmland, again owing to persecution (Swann & Etheridge 1995). Nonetheless, there is mounting evidence that population density in mixed farmland is now far greater than that found in predominantly upland areas at the time the last population estimate for Britain was

established. It is, of course, possible that the high densities recorded in recent studies are exceptional. In the largest study area, 2,620 km² of Devon farmland, there were 25-33 territorial pairs per hectad in 1983. In the absence of more recent data, we can only speculate whether this area now boasts similar concentrations to those in Shropshire and north Somerset.

Some study areas, such as those in Devon and the Cambrian Mountains, include both farmland and areas of upland sheepwalk and moorland. Observations in the Cambrian Mountains clearly illustrate the higher breeding density on farmland. In Devon, buzzard territories were smaller and more closely spaced in farmland, while larger, more widely spaced territories were characteristic of open moorland and conifer plantations, where food supply was more limited. In general, the decreased availability of prey, especially Rabbits, in upland areas leads to comparatively sparse concentrations of buzzards, and densities below 20 pairs per hectad are common.

The increase in Common Buzzards since 1983

In both the farmland and upland components of the Common Buzzard's range, there is evidence of rising numbers since 1983. In the north Somerset study, there was an increase of over 500% between 1982 and 2001 (R. Pry-

therch, verbally). Observations in the West Midlands, comparing original data from 1983 with sightings in 1996, found that soaring buzzards increased by 118% in the main part of the range, and by 348% in those tetrads at the edge of the range (Sim *et al.* 2000). In Snowdonia, the increase was more modest, being 40-50% over a similar period (Dare 1995). In north Breconshire, the buzzard population rose by 115% during the period 1983-1999, while the number of occupied tetrads grew by 51% during the same period (Shrubbs 2000). At Postbridge, Devon, numbers increased by about 70% between 1960-69 and 1990-93, reflecting a recovery from the cold winter of 1962/63 and the impact of myxomatosis, to reach levels similar to those recorded in 1956-58.

In addition to higher densities in core parts of the range, careful assessment of the eastward spread and in-filling which has occurred since the *New Atlas* is equally important when considering current population levels. Fig. 1 (based on Clements 2000) illustrates the Common Buzzard's range expansion since 1991. There are now substantial populations in Hampshire, Northamptonshire, Northumberland, Oxfordshire, Sussex, Warwickshire and Yorkshire. In Scotland, almost all suitable habitat is now occupied. Since 1997, small breeding populations have been established in the remaining eastern counties of Kent and Suffolk. While pairs are still widely scattered in some eastern counties, buzzards are probably approaching maximum breeding density in the west. For example, in west Oxfordshire, Common Buzzards are now estimated to occur at a level of around 20 pairs per hectad (R. Scroggs, verbally). Similarly, in SO77 (Worcestershire/Shropshire) 22 territorial pairs were found in 1996 in an area where there was no evidence of breeding during the *New Atlas* (Sim *et al.* 2001). In Essex, Hertfordshire and Kent, the population density remains far below the levels recorded in the west, although it is increasing rapidly. Much of this area contains prime buzzard habitat, which may eventually hold a population density of more than 50 territorial pairs per hectad.

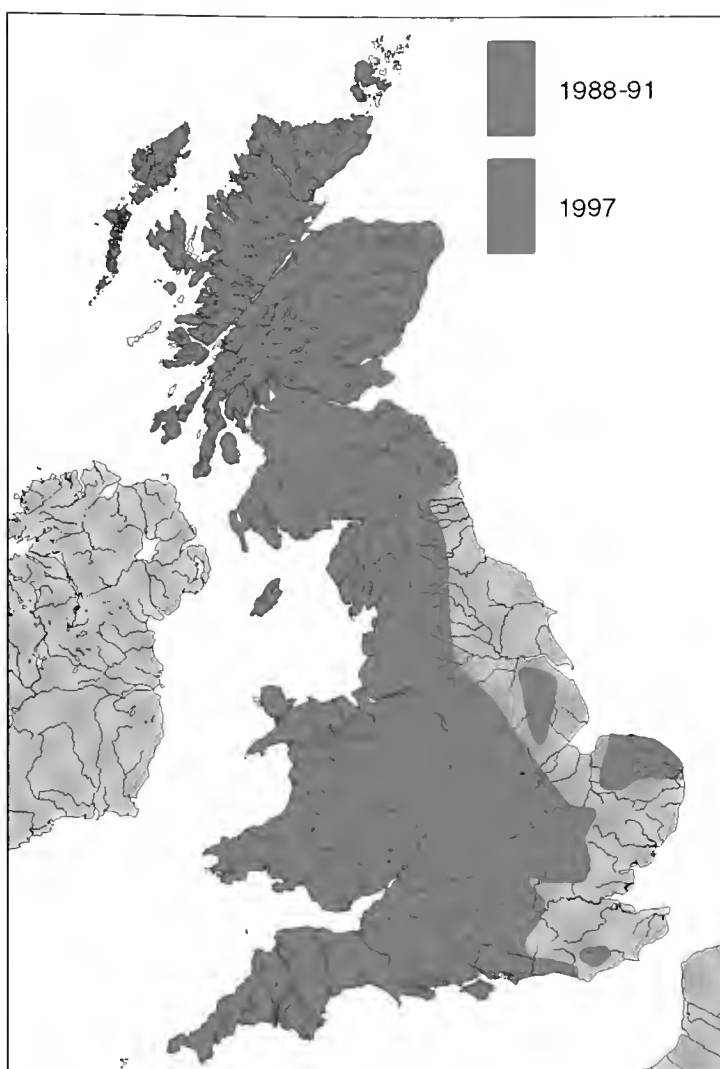


Fig. 1. Map showing the spread of the Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* in Britain up to 1997.

- The breeding range of Common Buzzard during the *New Atlas* fieldwork, 1988-1991 (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).
- Approximate breeding range of Common Buzzard in 1997 (after Clements 2000).

A population estimate of Common Buzzards for 2001

By analysing Ordnance Survey maps of the core part of the range, as identified by the *New Atlas*, the 1,425 hectads within this area were categorised into one of five broad habitat types, using the dominant habitat within each hectad (table 2). The number of hectads is lower than that in which Common Buzzards were recorded in the *New Atlas* period (1,544), since coastal hectads with less than 50% land area, together with squares in areas outside the main breeding range, have been excluded. As in the *New Atlas*, montane hectads were assumed to contain no buzzards, as were urban/suburban ones. The upland/conifer plantation category, which includes areas of unenclosed sheepwalk, as well as heather moorland, was assumed to support an average of 20 pairs per hectad. Parts of

Table 2. A population estimate of the Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* in Britain.

Habitat	No. hectads	Density (pairs/hectad)	Total (territorial pairs)
Montane plateau	43	0	0
Upland/conifer plantation	607	20	12,140
Farmland, >5% woodland *	619	40-60	24,760-37,140
Farmland, <5% woodland *	126	20	2,520
Urban/suburban	30	0	0
Total			39,420-51,800
Newly colonised, 1991-97	451	10-20	4,510-9,020
GRAND TOTAL			43,930-60,820
* approximate proportions			

Britain with dominant heathland/woodland, such as the New Forest, are included in this category. Areas of farmland with more than 5% woodland are likely to be similar to the mixed farmland category where high densities of Common Buzzards have been recorded recently. For such squares, the average of 40-60 pairs is a compromise between the higher levels found in north Somerset and Shropshire, and the lower levels recorded in Dorset and Easter Ross.

Farmland with less than 5% woodland was allocated a lower mean density, since at least some of this habitat, even in northern and western Britain, is likely to consist of intensive arable farmland, where the availability of both nest sites and prey species will be lower than in mixed farmland or pasture. In addition, the level of persecution may also be greater here. In the absence of much data from this type of habitat, an average of 20 pairs per hectad was estimated. In those parts of Britain colonised since 1991, 10-20 pairs per hectad were estimated, owing to the variation in density within such areas.

Is the resulting estimate, of 43,930-60,820 territorial pairs of Common Buzzards in Britain, accurate? Until more surveys are carried out in other parts of the range, the answer must remain uncertain. Even if the high-density farmland study areas described here prove to be exceptional, such that perhaps only 10% of such farmland would support more than 80 territorial pairs per hectad, the population would now be 35,000-40,000 pairs. If, however, such densities are commonplace in this habitat, the current population estimate would rise to 65,000-70,000 territorial pairs.

Extrapolating further, these figures suggest a possible future population of more than 70,000 territorial pairs in Britain. Indeed, if the high concentrations found in some study areas recently are duplicated across similar habitat in the future, perhaps as a result of continuing growth in the Rabbit population and further reductions in persecution, then a figure of 100,000+



Peter Cairns/Windrush

242. Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, Strathspey, Highland.



Richard Brooks/Windrush

243. Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, Wales, March 1996.

territorial pairs may be realistic. Similarly, a resurgence of myxomatosis, or other diseases in the Rabbit population, would check further spread. The Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* population at the time of the *New Atlas* was thought to be about 50,000 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993). Since then, the population may have fallen; data from the BTO's Breeding Birds Survey suggest a reduction of 30% between 1994 and 1999 (Baillie *et al.* 2001). As such, the Common Buzzard is probably now the most abundant diurnal raptor in Britain.

Acknowledgments

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Bird Illustrator of the Year 2002

Bird Illustrator of the Year

- 1st Steve McQueen (Thornwood, Glasgow)
2nd Paschalis Dougalis (Munich, Germany)
3rd Szabolcs Kókay (Budapest, Hungary)

Sponsored by:



CHRISTOPHER HELM
a member of the Royal Ornithologists' Union

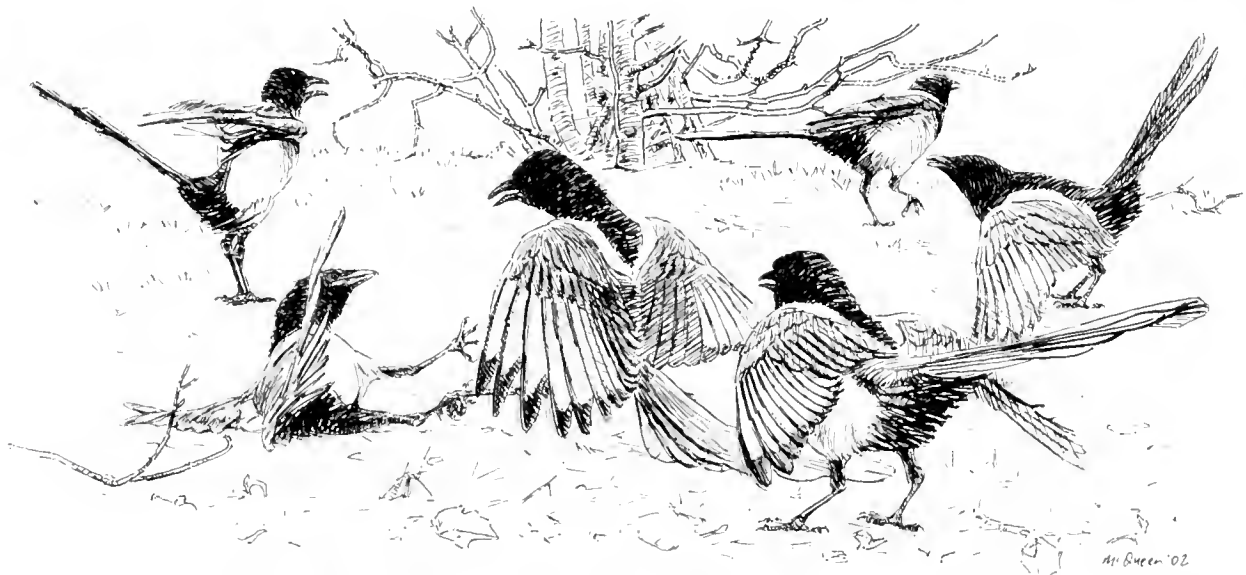
The PJC Award

- 1st Andrew Mart (Ilkeston, Derbyshire)

Each year since 1979, *British Birds* has set out to discover new talent in its annual bird illustration competition. This year, the judging took place in late April at the Christopher Helm offices in London, with Robert Gillmor, Alan Harris and myself on the

panel. As usual, each entrant had been required to submit a set of four black-and-white drawings in pen and ink or scraperboard, to precisely specified dimensions.

This year there were only 18 entries; fewer than last year. While this total was a little disap-



BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR winner: Magpies *Pica pica*. Steve McQueen



BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR winner: Crag Martins *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*. Steve McQueen



BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR winner: Common Ravens *Corvus corax*. Steve McQueen



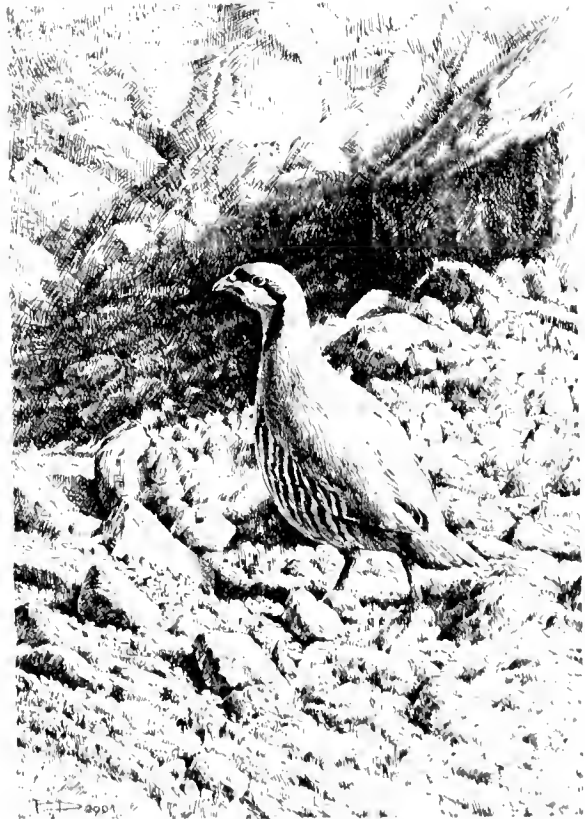
BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR winner: Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*. Steve McQueen



BIY second: Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*. Paschalis Dougalis



(Above) BIY second: Little Owl *Athene noctua*.
Paschalis Dougalis



(Right) BIY second: Chukar Partridge
Alectoris chukar. Paschalis Dougalis

pointing (has everyone turned to digital cameras?), the collection nonetheless spanned a broad geographical spectrum, with drawings received from as far afield as Hungary and Armenia. The international flavour was

reflected in the subject matter, with the species depicted ranging from Blackbird *Turdus merula* to Caucasian Black Grouse *Tetrao mlkosiewiczi* and, as the judges have come to expect, the overall standard of the entries was impressive,

with a broad diversity of style and technique on display. Many drawings also showed an encouraging willingness by artists to tackle unusual subject matter, such as Wood Pigeons *Columba palumbus* rain-bathing, or to deal head-on with tricky compositional challenges, such as the confusion of cable attachments partly obscuring a juvenile Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* perched on a power line.

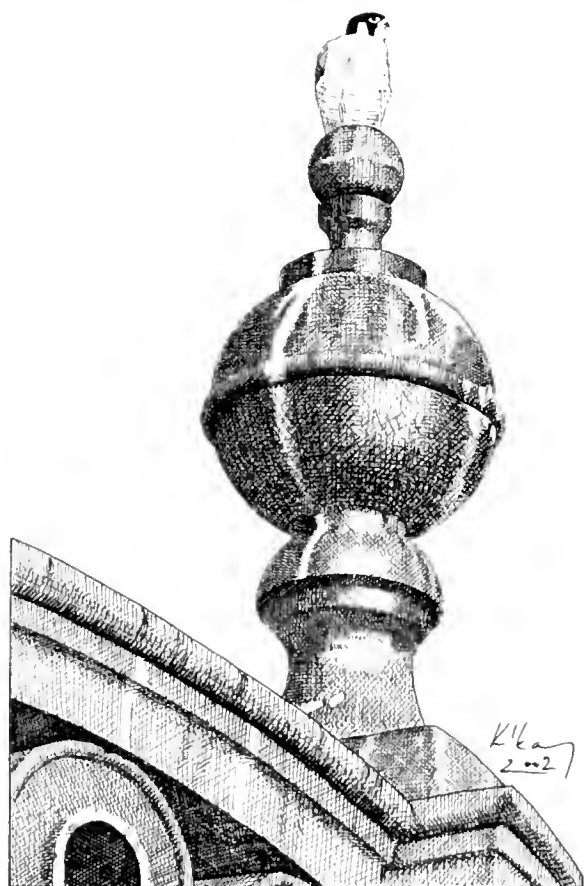
So what were the judges looking for? Well, judging did not follow a systematic checklist, but the drawings were nonetheless assessed according to consistent criteria. Firstly, obeying instructions: illustration is a disciplined art form, and every drawing has parameters of style, specifications and medium, dictated by its context. It is vital that the artist does not stray from the brief. Secondly, accuracy: the judges were looking for correct depiction of plumage, anatomy and proportions in the birds, as well as convincing background detail and a balanced perspective to the whole. Thirdly, authenticity: the judges wanted to see drawings which reflected personal experience, insight and observation, rather than second-hand replications of someone else's image or ideas. Fourthly,

technique: the drawing had to demonstrate that the artist was in control of the medium, could manipulate the tools competently and manage the use of line and shade to achieve the desired effect. Finally, imagination: the limitations of the medium and the brief can make it difficult for an artist to express a personal style. The successful drawings were those which combined discipline and technique with originality, a feel for composition and that elusive 'certain something' which, in the eyes of the judges, lifted them above the competition.

As ever, reaching a consensus on the winner proved tricky. With the contenders all laid out on the table, the nit-picking and hair-splitting began, with the judges looking for flaws and weaknesses by which to weed out the also-rans. The problems they identified in many drawings were similar to those in last year's competition, and clearly reflect the common challenges faced by any aspiring illustrator. Successful drawings captured a moment or a scene with complete authenticity: you could not doubt that the artist knew both the bird and its context intimately, and had distilled this knowledge into the evocative portrayal of a single moment. Less con-



BIY third: Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*. Szabolcs Kókay



BIY third: Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*.
Szabolcs Kókay

vincing were compositions which seemed to reflect what the artist *thought* should be there. Unless, for example, you have actually *seen* a Barn Owl *Tyto alba* fly in front of a barn, and have observed such details as the height at which it was flying, where and how it landed, the fall of the shadows and the angle of view (and, preferably, have sketched some of this for yourself), it is hard to assemble a convincing illustration, even if the individual components (the barn and the owl) are beautifully rendered.

At the same time, the illustrator must still be selective, not a slave to the image. This is why working from photographs can be dangerous. Any drawing is an interpretation, with its elements carefully ordered to balance the composition. Artists who reproduce directly from photographs, attempting a perfect replica of life, often lose control of their composition, cluttering it with intrusive elements which may pass unquestioned in a colour snap, but become ugly, intrusive or even incomprehensible in a drawing. Sketches can be composed and rearranged to accommodate whatever the artist wishes to express – this is the legitimate exercise of artistic licence – but copying a photograph allows no such flexibility. ‘If it doesn’t work,

don’t draw it,’ said Eric Ennion (or words to that effect); and he certainly knew.

Scale caused problems again, often arising from an overemphasis on surface detail at the expense of the drawing’s underlying structure. Detail is not the same as accuracy: the finest vermiculations on the scapulars of a European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, rendered with microscopic precision in a pen finer than a rictal bristle, are of no use if that nightjar, by virtue of its position in relation to a nearby fence post, is the size of a sheep. In fact, fence posts generally seem to spell trouble, and, if in doubt, I would suggest avoiding them altogether, or at least get out there and measure them first (and, while you are there, check how far one is from the next, and how many strands of barbed wire connect them). The same goes for shingle (it is not as small beneath the feet of a Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris* as it is beneath your own), and reedbeds (if a *Phragmites* stem is two metres high, how big is the Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* which is peering over the top of it?). These problems can be avoided by carefully plotting the perspective and proportions of a drawing before getting whipped up into a frenzy of cross-hatching. Control of tonal values is also important in establishing perspective within a confined space. A careful hierarchy of tone will bring the foreground forward and set the background back, but an over-strong hand in the wrong place – jet black shadows in the folds of a distant mountain range, for example – can bring the background looming forward to overwhelm the foreground.

But enough about the problems. The three winners presented excellent sets of drawings that each showed technique, experience and a particular individual flair and imagination. First prize was awarded to Steve McQueen, whose drawings showed a spontaneity and lightness of touch that can only come with an intuitive feel for the subject and confidence in the medium. The contortions of his squabbling Magpies *Pica pica* would find no place in any field guide, yet each has a shape which is indisputably Magpie, and their seemingly chaotic arrangement in the drawing has a real dynamism. His Common Ravens *Corvus corax* cresting a mountain ridge uses an admirable economy of line to capture the musculature of the land and the power of the wind that buoys up the birds. Steve McQueen’s work ably demonstrates that detail



THE PJC AWARD winner: Common Redshanks *Tringa totanus*. Andrew Mart

can be subordinated to action, and a loose style – if backed up with insight and confidence – has its own precision.

Second and third place were exactly the same as last year. Paschalis Dougalis received second prize with a detailed and accomplished set of drawings which, as with last year's collection, showed a fine technique for handling texture and a genuine feel for landscape. His squat Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, sagging on a branch during a preen, is a wonderfully tight study of plumage, with the complexities of the foreground twigs perfectly arranged to complement the bird, while his painting of Lesser Kestrels *Falco naumanni*, chosen as a front cover for a future edition of *BB*, shows impressive skill in a completely different medium. Szabolcs Kókay was awarded third prize for an imaginative set of artwork which continued his established theme of raptors and architecture. Of all the entrants, his work showed perhaps the strongest personal vision, and real ambition in tackling challenging subjects. This artist, you know, is not afraid of fence posts: just look at his attention to roof tiles in his Lesser Kestrel

drawing, and the detail of St Stephen's Cathedral in Budapest, on which the Peregrine Falcon is so perfectly set.

The PJC Award is presented each year, in memory of the late Pauline Jane Cook, for a single drawing selected for its individual merit. This year it was awarded to Andrew Mart for his simple drawing of copulating Common Redshanks *Tringa totanus*: an unusual image, beautifully observed. The birds themselves have a perfectly balanced lightness, and the screening foreground vegetation through which we see them brings a sense of intimacy, almost voyeurism, to the image.

No Richard Richardson prize (for artists aged 22 or younger) was awarded this year, but we hope that the wonderful work reproduced on these pages will encourage next year's entrants, young and not so young, to enter the competition. Illustrations of this quality are not only a delight to the eye and a useful resource for publishers; they also demonstrate the value of really *looking* at birds, and going beyond mere identification to investigate *why* they stir our imagination and fuel our obsessions.

Mike Unwin, Senior Editor at Christopher Helm, on behalf of the judges:
Robert Gillmor and Alan Harris

Notes

Predation of Slavonian Grebe nests by Otters

Previous studies of Slavonian Grebes *Podiceps auritus* in Scotland have recorded several instances of nests, breeding adults and chicks being predated. Remains of full-grown birds have suggested a mammalian predator. In 2001, 24-hour video cameras were installed at nests in Scotland in order to obtain further information on the causes of nest failure. Miniature surveillance cameras (c.15 x 25 mm; Maplin PH86T monochrome, focal length 3.6 mm), mounted on a 10-mm diameter aluminium pole, were placed immediately beside each nest. The lens and camera were camouflaged with green paint to resemble a piece of sedge; the cable was also camouflaged and pinned to the loch bed, so that it was held below the mud and detritus. Six infrared light-emitting diodes were fitted around the camera, illuminating the nest at night using a wavelength invisible to birds and mammals (940 nm) but detectable by the camera. Pictures were relayed by cable to a box, 25 m from the nest, holding a Sanyo time-lapse video recorder (TLS-224P), powered by a 38AH Yuasa cyclic 12V battery. One image was taken

every 0.2 seconds, allowing 24 hours to be recorded on a three-hour tape. Batteries and tape were changed daily.

Of the eight nests studied, two were predated, both by Otters *Lutra lutra*. At one nest, on Loch Ruthven, Inverness-shire, an adult and four chicks were predated. Examination of the tape for 16th June 2001 showed an adult brooding four chicks and incubating one remaining egg. The adult rapidly left the nest in the direction of the shore at 23.18 hrs, before parts of the Otter's back and tail became visible. Three of the chicks, which tumbled out at the adult's departure, returned to the nest over the next eight minutes. The Otter then went back to the nest, and is observed killing and eating one of the chicks. The chick was, however, obscured by the Otter's body when it was being killed, so the method of killing is unknown. The egg was knocked into the water but not eaten; and the Otter left at 23.30 hrs. An adult is visible on tape visiting the nest at first light (03.50 hrs), and then several times during the following day, often carrying food (the grebes had been



244. Remains of predated Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*, Loch Ruthven, Inverness-shire, June 2001. (a) skin with feet and part of one wing; (b) one inverted foot within skin, other protruding; (c) wings; (d) head; (e) clumps of body feathers with fragments of skin; (f) gizzard.

feeding young at the nest the previous day). The video camera records one final visit by the parent to the nest two days later (i.e. about 30 hours after it was predated), shortly before the recording device was removed. An inspection of the nest area the morning after the predation event showed that a single adult, which was swimming around calling, was present near the empty nest. Remains of the other adult were found 3 m from the nest, in shallow water near the shore. The larger body parts comprised the decapitated head, skin and detached wings, and the gizzard (plate 244). The skin had been partly inverted at the base of one of the feet in a similar manner to some of the grebe remains found in previous studies.

The other nest was predated during the incubation period, on 23rd July 2001, at a loch in Strathspey, Inverness-shire. Examination of the tape showed the incubating bird leaving the nest and clutch of two eggs at 22.37 hrs. It returned at 22.53 hrs, looking agitated, then left two minutes later. At 02.39 hrs, the adult again returned to the nest for a short period, alert and looking around. It left at 02.49 hrs. At 03.29 hrs, an Otter visited the nest and removed one egg. Within a minute it returned and took the second egg. At 03.30 hrs, it made a third visit, looked and sniffed around the empty nest and left. At 04.06 hrs (around first light) an adult grebe returned briefly. There were several visits by an adult over the next ten hours, at some of which the bird removed material from the nest. Both adults were seen on the loch the morning



Mark Hancock

245. Shell remains from a Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus* nest predated by an Otter *Lutra lutra*, Strathspey, Inverness-shire, July 2001. Remains were found at the base of sedges close to the nest.

after the predation, and shell remains were found within 3 m of the empty nest. One egg was crushed, but in one piece, floating in water at the edge of the sedge-bed. The other had been reduced to small fragments in the mud at the base of the sedge, and near a piece of driftwood, with Otter prints beside it (plate 245).

At another nest, in Morayshire, a crow *Corvus corone* and a Common Gull *Larus canus* were recorded taking eggs from a nest, after three young had hatched and while the nest was still in regular use.

These studies will continue in 2002, with a view to building up a more comprehensive picture of the reasons for nest failure in the small Scottish Slavonian Grebe population.

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Grey Herons nesting on the ground

In 1999, at Worsbrough Country Park, near Barnsley, South Yorkshire, a pair of Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* nested successfully on a raft set up for terns *Sterna*. The pair began nest-building on 11th May, and the first chick hatched on 21st June. Three young fledged, the first of these

leaving the raft on 29th July; the raft was abandoned by 13th August. This platform has not been used by Grey Herons in subsequent breeding seasons. The use by nesting herons of an exposed tern raft such as this does not appear to have been documented previously.

Richard Moss

Worsbrough Mill & Country Park, Worsbrough Bridge, Barnsley S70 5LJ

EDITORIAL COMMENT Ground-nesting by Grey Herons in Britain is unusual but not unknown, and occurs, for example, on the skerries off Colonsay (Malcolm Ogilvie *in litt.*). Elsewhere in Europe, this species not infrequently nests in reedbeds. Hancock & Kushlan (1984, *The Herons Handbook*) stated that its nest sites vary widely: 'They are usually in tall trees up to about 35 m (115 ft) high, but bushes and reedbeds are also used, as well as cliff ledges, buildings, walls and even the bare ground.'

Similarly, *BWP* (Vol. 1) records that Grey Herons will nest 'on ground among heather [*Calluna/Erica*], exceptionally on buildings, bridges, or in open on shingle beach or bare ground'. Nevertheless, a floating raft does appear to represent a nesting site hitherto unrecorded for this species in Britain.

Grey Heron eating Rabbit

The observations by John Sparks and Martin Coath (*Brit. Birds* 95: 85) of a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* eating a Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* prompt me to record the following. On 19th May 1997, at Farlington Marshes, Hampshire, I watched a Grey Heron which had caught a Rabbit, an abundant mammal at the locality. The heron, holding the Rabbit's neck in its bill, flew to a small pond nearby and drowned the mammal, dunking it several times;

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the Rabbit, swallowed head first, seemed to slide easily down the heron's neck. The heron remained at the pool for a further six minutes, occasionally dipping its bill into the water, before flying off to rest on a distant field. I assumed that the Grey Heron had saturated the Rabbit in order partly to make swallowing easier; similar treatment of a rat *Rattus* was documented by Lowe (1954, *The Heron*).

EDITORIAL COMMENT The opportunism of the Grey Heron was mentioned in an editorial comment following the previous notes (*Brit. Birds* 95: 85). It seems that Rabbits, despite their large size, may be a not particularly uncommon prey of this species. Any further notes on this subject will not, therefore, be published separately, but will be held on file for future reference.

Black-headed Gull aerial-skimming

With reference to the note on a Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* aerial-skimming (*Brit. Birds* 94: 437), and the author's question as to how widespread the habit was, it may be of interest to record the following. On 18th and 19th July 1984, at Corsham Lake, Wiltshire, I watched a Black-headed Gull make a series of five skims over the lake; on one occasion, the gull appeared to catch an item of food. Since then, I have observed this behaviour many times, all at Corsham Lake. The most recent

Julian C. Rolls

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observation was in September 2001, when I saw up to five individuals skimming. The most common items picked up were leaves of oak *Quercus* and Common Reed *Phragmites australis*, but a number of food items were also caught, including several small fish. The area where the latter were taken was also being fished by two Great Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* and four Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, and I assumed that these birds had forced small fish to the surface of the lake.

EDITORIAL COMMENT It seems probable that this is a not uncommon type of behaviour of Black-headed Gulls in certain circumstances. We shall not, therefore, publish further notes on this subject unless they contain information of particular or additional interest.

Roost site of European Nightjar

On 12th June 2001, on Bucklebury Common, west Berkshire, I accidentally flushed a European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* from heathland. The roost site was a small clearing,

approximately 2.5 m in diameter, which was covered with cut and discarded branches of Silver Birch *Betula pendula* and was completely encircled by Silver Birch and Scots Pine *Pinus*

silvestris trees 2-2.5 m tall. When flushed, the nightjar flew straight up, holding its body and tail vertically until it had cleared the surrounding trees, and then flew off, giving a 'co-ic' call. Droppings revealed that four different branches towards the edge of the clearing had been roosted on during the season.

Random daytime inspections of this roost site were made until 24th July and, on all visits, a male nightjar was present within the clearing. The bird was always roosting across branches which were 7.5-15 cm above ground, and was invariably facing into the centre of the clearing. When approached, the nightjar always adopted

the flattened defence posture. Sightings between 12th June and 24th July, and an examination of droppings on the latter date, confirmed that the same four 'roost' branches had been used during the period.

The site is notable because the encircling trees severely reduced the vision of the roosting bird beyond the clearing and restricted its escape path when disturbed. The situation probably also offered a measure of added protection against disturbance, which may explain the degree of site fidelity exhibited during the observation period.

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Yellow Wagtail stealing food from House Martins

On 13th September 1999, I was watching House Martins *Delichon urbica* feeding nestlings at the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust Centre, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire. Many Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava* were present on the reserve that day, and four or five individuals were feeding along the margins of freshwater pools in the vicinity of the House Martin nests. On three occasions between 16.00 and 16.30 hrs, I observed at least one Yellow Wagtail stealing unidentified insects from a House Martin with freshly caught prey. The wagtail(s) appeared to initiate the raid almost immediately after the martin had secured a food item. Each attempt that I

observed was successful, and in one instance a martin was chased for approximately 20 m before its food was stolen.

I had never seen this behaviour at Slimbridge before, despite Yellow Wagtails being present on the reserve throughout early September, and, to my knowledge, kleptoparasitic behaviour has never been recorded in any wagtail species previously (see Brockmann & Barnard 1979).

Reference

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Common Redstart feeding small mammal to nestlings

As part of our studies of a population of Common Redstarts *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* which breeds in nestboxes in a pine *Pinus* forest in east Bohemia, Czech Republic, we have video-recorded parent-young interactions inside the boxes. On 30th June 1997, we filmed a male parent bringing a newborn rodent to a nest of six five-day-old chicks (plate 246). The mammal was identified as a young Bank Vole *Clethrionomys glareolus* (Mazák 1960); it was naked, about 20 mm long (excluding the tail) and clearly still alive. The male redstart could not allocate the food item instantly, since the chicks were not able to swallow it. He offered it to two chicks but always took it back after a

while. After about five seconds, the vole was finally swallowed by the chick to which it had first been offered. The chick did not seem to be adversely affected, since it begged for food once more on the male's next visit, one minute later.

To our knowledge, this is the first record of vertebrate food being taken by Common Redstarts, and probably the first record of live mammal prey in the diet of a passerine chick of similar size in Europe. The food is not, however, exceptional in terms of its size. In our previous analyses of nestling diet in the same location, we recorded food items up to 30 mm long: these were larvae of geometrid moths or somewhat smaller adult bush-crickets (*Tettigoni-*

idae). There are even some records of Mole-cricket *Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa* and dragonflies and damselflies (Odonata) in the Common Redstart's diet, these having usually been eaten after removal of the legs or hard exoskeletal parts (Menzel 1984; Glutz von Blotzheim *et al.* 1988).

BWP includes several instances of vertebrates in the diet of adults of small insectivorous species in the Western Palearctic, but very few records of such items being fed to nestlings. Godin (1977) observed a Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* which brought two small frogs *Rana* to its nest; there are also two records of Pied Wagtails *Motacilla alba* feeding small fish to their young (Brown 1948; Chappell 1949), one of a Rock Pipit *Anthus spinoletta* [sic] feeding its young on fish brought from an Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica* colony (Duncan 1981), and a record of a Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* delivering a small lizard to its chicks (*BWP*).

Such behaviour illustrates the opportunism of many species. The instances recorded above were presumably a result of food availability, and the choice of items seemed to be influenced by prey size rather than being restricted to a specific prey taxon. The young Bank Vole may have been collected on the ground surface after it had been deserted by the female parent while she was moving her litter.

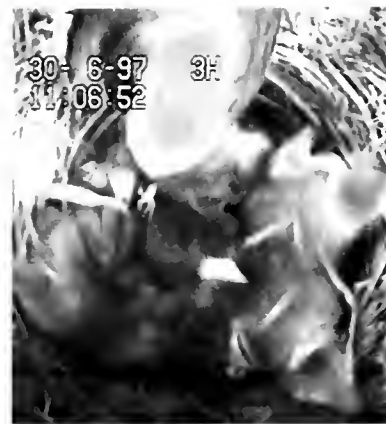
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246. Male
Common
Redstart
*Phoenicurus
phoenicurus*
feeding young
Bank Vole
*Clethrionomys
glareolus* to
five-day-old
chicks, Czech
Republic,
June 1997.



We thank Dr Vladimír Vohralík for his help with the rodent identification and Pavel Šustr for creating the photo from our videotape.

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Adult female Blackbird assisting pair in nest-building

Two pairs of Blackbirds *Turdus merula* regularly breed in my small garden at Bramhope, near Leeds, West Yorkshire. In spring 2001, one of the 'pairs' consisted of three birds: an adult male and two adult females. The threesome began nest-building in the last week of April. Both adult females were involved in collecting material and no disputes between the two were observed; in fact, on one occasion, I saw them standing together, both holding nesting material. Once it was complete, both females remained in close proximity to the nest, the

'helper' female often sitting on top of the bush in which it was located. Four eggs were laid, apparently by the 'alpha' female, which then began to incubate the eggs. Sadly, the nest was predated by a Magpie *Pica pica* and, although I subsequently saw the alpha female, I did not see the helper again.

Although *BWP* mentions rare occasions of bigamy, and there are records of juveniles in earlier broods helping with subsequent ones, I can find no reference to the assistance of an adult 'helper' female in nest-building or breeding.

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Rhynchokinesis in waders

One's first experience of a wader deliberately bending its upper mandible is a surprise; at first sight, birds' bills seem to be such rigid structures. The upper mandible has, in fact, some flexibility, and waders can occasionally be seen exercising this flexibility, no doubt a form of stretching, a comfort action to keep the feeding apparatus in good working order. Cranial kinesis is the ability of birds to move the upper mandible in relation to the skull (Burton 1985). It takes two forms: prokinesis, in which the entire upper mandible hinges where it is attached to the skull; and rhynchokinesis, where the base of the upper mandible is fixed rigidly to the skull, and bending takes place some distance along the mandible, nearer the tip than the base. In the case of rhynchokinesis, the bone structure of the upper mandible allows the flexibility. Prokinesis is shown by most birds, but only cranes *Grus*, waders, swifts (Apodidae) and hummingbirds (Trochilidae) exhibit rhynchokinesis.

Not only are waders able to flex the mandibles upwards, but it is also probable that many species have some limited ability to bend

the upper mandible downwards. No doubt the reason for the flexibility of the upper mandible is that it aids both the capture and the manipulation of prey items when feeding, especially when probing at depth in mud.

The lucky observer may see the phenomenon briefly as birds 'yawn' or 'gape', when the upward movement can be substantial, probably far greater than the degree of flexibility actually used when feeding. The movement is over in a couple of seconds, adding to the incredulity of what one has witnessed.

Plates 247-253 illustrate a series of waders exhibiting rhynchokinesis. The most dramatic upward articulation is shown by those species with a longer bill, but even those with quite short bills show the phenomenon. Downward flexibility can sometimes be seen when holding prey items, which can give waders an open-billed appearance, similar to, but less dramatic than, that shown permanently by openbills, *Anastomus*.

Reference

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247. Adult Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, Kent, September 1986. This bird was roosting when it briefly stretched both wings upwards, then gaped as shown. Snipe are able to bend the bill upwards even more than seen here.

R. J. Chandler



248. (Above) Adult Long-billed Curlew *Numenius americanus*, Texas, USA, August 1992. This individual paused while walking across the beach, then briefly flexed its bill.

249. (Right) Adult (or perhaps first-summer) Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*, California, USA, April 1992. This bird paused briefly while feeding.



250. (Below) Juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper *Culicis melanotos*, New Jersey, September 1985. A roosting individual.

All photographs by R. J. Chandler





251. (Above) Adult Sempalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*, Texas, USA, August 1992. This shows that even the small, short-billed wader species can exhibit rynchokinesis.



252. (Left) Adult Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, Kent, May 1985. This individual demonstrates the downward flexibility of the upper mandible when holding food items.

253. (Below) Juvenile Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*, Cornwall, September 2001. Another example of downward mandible flexibility when holding food items.

All photographs by R. J. Chandler



Ruddy Shelducks in Britain

As co-author of the paper 'Ruddy Shelducks in Britain and Ireland, 1986-94' (Vinicombe & Harrop 1999), I was interested to read Andrew Harrop's recent paper 'The Ruddy Shelduck in Britain' (Harrop 2002). Most of his paper, written on behalf of the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee, represents a very thoroughly researched and impressive review of the old records of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea*, of a standard that we have come to expect and admire from the BOURC. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the conclusions regarding the 1994 influx, which are, quite frankly, bizarre.

My own conclusions on the status of the species in Britain, Ireland and northwest mainland Europe were reached after three years of painstaking research, and were set out in detail in the original paper (*Brit. Birds* 92: 254). They were, in fact, at odds with those of AHJH, who had a theory that the whole 1994 invasion may have originated from a zoo in Ukraine, even though that zoo is very close to the species' natural range. I will not repeat my views again, but I feel that I must comment on some of the individual points put forward by AHJH on behalf of the Committee.

We are told that female Ruddy Shelducks from Siberia and other parts of the range in Asia *apparently* (my italics) lack white face patches. Later in the paper, this statement evolves into established fact and is used to justify the conclusion that the birds recorded in Greenland and Suffolk in 1892 were unlikely to have come from the eastern part of the range. If we take this argument a stage further, are we then to assume that these birds came from North Africa? If so, the Greenland birds must have made a 2,500-km direct crossing of the North Atlantic to get there. Given that Greenland and Iceland lie on a Great Circle route from southwest Asia through Fennoscandia (as stated in the original paper), a southeasterly origin for these birds is far more likely. If we take Harrop's argument to its logical conclusion, then if all the females in the 1994 influx into Fennoscandia had white face patches, they too must have come from North Africa, which would be rather surprising given the size of that population (about 2,500 individuals) and the

paucity of records in France and Spain in 1994. Given that Cramp & Simmons (1977) considered the species to be monotypic, this apparent difference, if it exists, should be thoroughly researched, vetted and properly published in a respected ornithological journal before being taken as fact. I certainly have no recollection of geographical variation in the Ruddy Shelducks that I have seen, from Morocco in the west to China in the east. What is more, even a cursory search of the Internet found a photograph of four wild Ruddy Shelducks on a Japanese website, three of which had white face patches (see www.ne.ip/asahi/bird/walk/flight/akaturukusi/htm).

The birding public is mildly berated for failing to submit any descriptions of the 1994 birds to the BOURC. This ignores the fact that rarity descriptions should be submitted not to the BOURC but to the BBRC; but then no such mechanism exists for Ruddy Shelduck as the species is not on the current rarities list. If the BOURC wanted descriptions, then it should have published a request for them.

I accept the point that the grand total of Ruddy Shelducks in Britain in 1994 was slightly less than in the previous three years, but the point about 1994 is that there were three notable flocks, including an exceptional group of 12 on the Wirral. AHJH states that this flock included one or two escaped birds which had been in the area for several years. This is true, but he ignores the fact that the core of the flock consisted of eight individuals which were first seen at Point of Air, Flintshire, on 24th July, immediately after the full moon (when wildfowl tend to migrate) and at precisely the time of the start of the main influx into Sweden. The fact that this group of eight was subsequently joined by one or two escaped birds is neither here nor there.

The westerly bias to the records in 1994 is also used against the argument that these were of wild origin, yet this ignores the fact that the bulk of the influx in 1892 actually occurred in Ireland. AHJH then goes on to argue that the westerly records in 1994 do not suggest an arrival from Fennoscandia. This argument shows a complete lack of understanding of the nature of the movement. Obviously, the irrup-

tion out of southeast Europe and/or southwest Asia occurred on a broad front. The main thrust of the movement was northwest into Fennoscandia. The birds we picked up in Britain were undoubtedly from the southern fringe of that broad-front movement and they would no doubt have arrived directly across the North Sea from the near Continent. To conclude that any birds which reached Britain must have arrived via Fennoscandia is nonsense. It is analogous to saying, for example, that if 20 Icterine Warblers *Hippolais icterina* arrive in Shetland and five arrive in Norfolk, then the five in Norfolk must have arrived via Shetland!

Finally, AHJH notes that the October arrival of the Cornwall/Scilly flock was out of kilter with the main influx. In the original paper, he was arguing against wild vagrancy by saying that the July/August peak in Britain did not tie in with the October date of a ringing recovery from Kirghizstan to Poland. He cannot have it both ways! In the original paper, southerly movements from late autumn onwards were clearly demonstrated for previous years and Ogilvie (1892) suggested this phenomenon over 100 years ago.

I really cannot understand why AHJH and the BOURC are closing their minds to the obvious fact that numbers of Ruddy Shelducks peak in Britain and Ireland in July/August and that they tend to occur in small flocks. This was the pattern found by Rogers during the period 1965-79 (Rogers 1982), it was also the pattern

Keith Vinicombe
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I am pleased that Keith Vinicombe feels that most of my paper represents a very thoroughly researched and impressive review. Some of his other comments are, however, misleading and require a response. He has also over-simplified the views I expressed in our 1999 paper.

The source of the statement that female Ruddy Shelducks from Siberia and other parts of the species' range in Asia apparently lack white face patches is very reliable, and was checked prior to publication. I agree that more research into this apparent variation is desirable, but Keith Vinicombe has misrepresented the subsequent suggestion that the Greenland and Suffolk specimens are unlikely to have come from the eastern part of the species' range. First, the word 'unlikely' implies proba-

during 1986-94 (Vinicombe & Harrop 1999) and it fits *precisely* the pattern of the accepted wild influxes into Britain and Ireland in 1892 and into Fennoscandia in 1994. Yet the BOURC persists in regurgitating the same old escape argument like some kind of worn-out mantra.

As I mentioned in the original paper, there have been large late-summer incursions of Ruddy Shelducks into the Netherlands in recent years. In 2001, there was a *single flock* of 101 at Eemmeer, Huizen, Nord-Holland, on 29th July (*Birdwatch* 112: 63) with additional birds elsewhere in the country. Even if, for the sake of argument, one concludes that these birds are feral, the BOURC must accept the obvious fact that *something* is happening to Ruddy Shelducks in northwest Europe. If the Committee continues to bury its head in the sand, perhaps it could explain: (a) why the species is physically incapable of crossing the North Sea; and (b) exactly which zoo it thinks these birds escape from each summer?

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bility, not fact. Second, Siberia and the eastern part of the species' range lie well to the east of the Western Palearctic so this suggestion does not exclude the possibility (quite likely, in my opinion) that these birds originated in southeast Europe and/or southwest Asia.

We did not berate the birding public for failing to submit descriptions to BOURC, though we did express regret that descriptions had apparently not been submitted to County Recorders.

I am not sure what Keith Vinicombe means by his Icterine Warbler analogy since, if a large fall of this species occurred on the east coast, I would assume that they had arrived from Fennoscandia. Analogies between wildfowl and passerines are not necessarily valid, but the fact

is that the pattern of records in Britain does not suggest that most of the Ruddy Shelducks in 1994 arrived either from Fennoscandia or from the near Continent.

Although not discussed in my paper, one of the problems with the flock in Cornwall and Scilly is that it included at least three individuals aged as 'immatures' (Vinicombe & Harrop 1999). These birds cannot have been in their second calendar-year (because in October such birds would be indistinguishable from adults). If correctly aged as 'immatures', they must, therefore, have been juveniles, yet the influx into Fennoscandia in 1994 (which both predated the majority of British records and

occurred at a logical staging area for wild birds moving northwest from southwest Asia) did not include any recorded juveniles and was in most cases too early to do so. It is consequently very difficult to make a convincing link between the Cornish flock and the influx into Fennoscandia.

The main difference between BOURC and Keith Vinicombe over this issue is that he professes certainty while we do not. It is not unlikely that feral birds from the Continent (potentially eligible for Category C5) occur in Britain, but proving it is another matter. That is why post-1950 records have been placed in Category D for the time being.

Andrew H. J. Harrop

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Colour reproduction

I read the recent paper on the characters and variation of the eastern race of Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* (*Brit. Birds* 95: 42-61) with great interest. It did, however, unintentionally illustrate rather well the problem with using artwork in conjunction with photographs, and also the validity or otherwise of the latter when trying to show subtle differences in plumage colours.

I am only too well aware of the difficulty of ensuring accuracy in reproducing paintings, and, in my experience, even the most carefully corrected proofs do not guarantee that the printed page can be matched exactly with the original. Where photographs are concerned, however, there are the serious additional problems of colour balance in the films used and, most importantly, the light conditions under which exposures were made.

In the Reed Warbler paper, one only has to look at two images to question seriously the value of any reproduced illustration attempting to show the very subtle variations in plumage

colour with which this paper was largely concerned. Structural features are, of course, a different matter. The two images are no. 7 in fig. 1, and the photograph on page 53, both of which purport to show worn adults of the race *fuscus*.

The paper raises an issue in which I have long been interested, which may also be worth commenting on. This is the lack of a consistent and reliable system of colour nomenclature for use in describing plumage and bare-part colours in birds. I have on countless occasions needed such a guide when handling trapped birds in the field, as well as at the museum bench. Even in works such as *BWP*, there is no explanation as to what is really meant by the names chosen to describe colours. Many attempts have been made over the past 100 years, none with any degree of success at all. Surely, nowadays, when it is possible to analyse and reproduce colours on a more rigid scientific basis, it ought to be possible to produce a definitive guide, to put colour description on a sounder basis.

Martin Woodcock

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Readers will be aware that there was a problem with the printing of Brian Small's plate in the February issue, and that an improved version was included with the May issue of *British Birds*. The discrepancies between the two illustrations that Martin Woodcock refers to are now, therefore, less obvious, although this does not detract from the main argument of his letter.

News and comment

Compiled by Bob Scott and Adrian Pitches

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of *British Birds*

British Birdwatching Fair

August, of course, marks the annual gathering of the birding clan at the British Birdwatching Fair (BBWF), at Rutland Water. This year's fair (the 14th), on August 16th–18th, is raising funds for BirdLife International's conservation efforts in the rapidly dwindling lowland rainforest of Sumatra, the setting for possibly the most acute bird conservation crisis on the planet. BirdLife revealed in April that three-quarters of Asia's threatened birds are forest-dependent species and that 27 of these are listed as Critically Endangered, including the newly rediscovered Sumatran Ground-cuckoo *Carpococcyx viridis*. Nowhere is the crisis facing forest birds in Indonesia worse than on the island of Sumatra, where 17 forest bird species are Globally Threatened and a further 73 are Near Threatened. Alarming, if current logging rates continue, all remaining lowland forest is likely to be lost in Sumatra by 2005 and in Indonesian Borneo (Kalimantan) by 2010, according to the World Bank.

So, even more incentive to attend all three days of the fair and spend large amounts of money on books, optics and Christmas gift subscriptions to *British Birds* (see us in Marquee 3, stands 6/7). Highlights this year include the return of the irreverent panel game *Call My Ruff* (the brain-child of the Oriental Bird Club) with panellists including Tony Juniper, Nigel Collar and Tim Cleeves. Another OBC initiative, following the success of last year's *Gurney's Pitta Bitter*, will be *Hornbill Ale* on sale in the ever-popular beer/networking tent. The OBC hopes to raise £5,000 this year (see them in Marquee 5, stands 15/16) to fund a project researching the ecology of hornbills (Bucerotidae) in the lowland forest of Sumatra.

Last year, the Birdfair raised £135,000 towards conservation in eastern Cuba, taking the total raised by BBWFs to date above the £750,000 mark. The flagship bird was Ivory-billed Woodpecker *Campephilus principalis*: the only time an (arguably) extinct species (see below) has been used to publicise the fair. This year's T-shirt bird is Red-naped Trogon *Harpactes kasumba*.

Links: BBWF (www.birdfair.org.uk), BirdLife (www.birdlife.org), OBC (www.orientalbirdclub.org).

Ivory-billed Woodpecker expedition was a shot in the dark

Cornell University ornithologists have had to concede defeat in their quest to find the last remaining Ivory-billed Woodpeckers *Campephilus principalis* in the USA. After analysing 4,000 hours of sound recordings from the catchment area of the Pearl River, Louisiana, gathered during January to March this year, the expedition team has said that sounds initially identified as possible drumming woodpeckers were, in fact, distant gunshots.

The results of this year's study may not, however, be conclusive as to the presence or absence of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers in southern Louisiana. Persistent

accounts of the woodpeckers, bearing a reasonable level of credibility, suggest that the possibility of their existence demands continued scientific inquiry. The bottomland hardwood forests of the lower Pearl River are extensive, and they are now in better condition to support populations of large woodpeckers than they have been for more than a century. Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and expedition sponsors Zeiss Sports Optics will now discuss the prospects for a follow-up search.

Links: Zeiss (www.zeiss.com), Cornell Lab of Ornithology (www.birds.cornell.edu).

Upturn in Black Grouse fortunes

Another black, white and red bird on the Critical list has shown a heartening recovery in its English stronghold. The annual survey of lekking male Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* in the north Pennines has logged more than 800 individuals for the first time since the Black Grouse Recovery Project (a partnership between the Game Conservancy Trust, the RSPB, English Nature, Northumbrian Water and the Ministry of Defence) was launched in 1996. The project area stretches from the Yorkshire Dales north through Cumbria, County Durham and Northumberland.

The Recovery Project has been proactive in habitat improvement and predator control. Black Grouse thrive where there is a mosaic of habitats, including heather moorland, rough pasture, native woodland and meadows. Displaying males have made a 4.6% comeback per year in areas where sheep grazing has been reduced and agri-environment schemes have been initiated. But where grazing has not been restricted, there has been an annual 1.7% decline in lekking males (see *Brit. Birds* 95: 358). This will be addressed over the next five years with the help of further funding, to the tune of £50,000, from Northumbrian Water.

New Recorder for Cleveland

Rob Little has taken over from Graeme Joynt as the county recorder for Cleveland. His address is 5 Belgrave Court, Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, Cleveland TS25 1BF; telephone: 01429 428940/07740 152979; e-mail: rob.little@ntl-world.com

Cull of the wild at Otterburn

The Game Conservancy Trust is conducting what it calls 'the biggest scientific investigation ever undertaken in Britain into the effect of predation control on upland birds', on 48 sq. km of heather moorland at Otterburn in Northumberland. The eight-year Otterburn Wader Experiment aims to measure the impact of predators on declining ground-nesting bird populations such as Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* and Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*. For the first time, researchers plan to isolate the effects of predation control by gamekeepers from other factors, such as variations in habitat.

Dr Andrew Hoodless from the GCT said: 'The current breeding success of the waders is insufficient to maintain stable breeding populations, but this is typical of many moors without gamekeepers. The next six years will show whether predation control can reverse the fortunes of these birds.'

The study area comprises four 10–12-sq.-km plots, at least 6 km apart, where baseline population studies have been conducted over the past two years. In what promises to be a controversial, yet illuminating, study, the only main variable will be the extent of predation control carried out by two gamekeepers. Killing of Red Foxes *Vulpes vulpes*, Stoats *Mustela erminea* and crows *Corvus* will be carried out for three years and then cease for three years on one plot, while another plot will be undergoing this sequence in reverse. Of the two remaining plots, one will be subject to predation control for all six years, while the other will remain without predation control for the same period. The two six-year-term management regimes are designed to enable the measurement of any population changes in some of the more long-lived species, such as Eurasian Curlew.

Links: Game Conservancy Trust (www.game-conservancy.org.uk).

Major RSPB purchase in the North Pennines

Back in the North Pennines... the RSPB has announced its largest-ever land-purchase in the north of England. The Society has bought Tarn House Farm on the Cumbria/Northumberland border: 1,457 ha of moorland, upland pasture and blanket bog. The farm is part of the existing leasehold reserve of Geltsdale, which covers 4,705 ha, and substantial grant aid towards the purchase price (£800,000) was provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Countryside Agency.

The reserve will be managed to maximise its attraction for nesting Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* by planting up overgrazed land with native trees. Damp areas will be flooded to encourage waders, and the reserve will also benefit the populations of Red Squirrels *Sciurus vulgaris* and Otters *Lutra lutra*.

Owning, rather than leasing, an extensive area of the North Pennines will allow proper monitoring of any prospecting Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus*, and protecting the region's tiny breeding population of this heavily persecuted raptor will be one of the Society's key priorities on the reserve.

No Airport@Cliffe

Another new RSPB reserve – Cliffe Pools, in Kent – may face closure before it even fully opens. As reported previously in *N&C* (*Brit. Birds* 95: 202), proposals for a new London airport on the North Kent Marshes are taxiing along the minister's desk at the Department of Transport.

No less than four internationally important wetland sites could be under threat if the airport became a reality: the Thames Estuary and Marshes, the Medway Estuary and Marshes, the Benfleet and Southend Marshes, and the Swale, all of which are designated as both Special Protection Areas and RAMSAR sites. The RSPB has five reserves in the area, including Northward Hill which holds the UK's largest heronry.

No Airport@Cliffe is the high-profile campaign now underway to oppose the airport plan, even before the Government formally unveils it. Chris Corrigan, Director of RSPB South East, said: 'The threatened proposal to build an airport on the North Kent Marshes could be the biggest battle the British conservation movement has ever had to tackle. The primary objective is to make sure that any plans for an airport at Cliffe are scrapped before they even get as far as the drawing board. Your support will be vital in achieving this goal.' To register support for this campaign, go to www.bbc.co.uk/kent/news/issue_week/airport4.shtml. Perry Haines, of the RSPB, is co-ordinating the opposition to the airport proposal; contact him on: NoAirportAtCliffe@rspb.org.uk

Disabled birders tour the world

One Kent birder who has already added his name to the No Airport@Cliffe campaign is portly web wizard Bo Beolens. Portly? Bo's phenomenal compilation of birding websites is called Fatbirder (www.fatbirder.com); with more than 600 pages, it is a portal to 15,000 ornithological websites, and attracts one million hits a month. Bo also finds time to run the Disabled Birders Association (www.disabledbirdersassociation.org.uk), which champions access to birding sites for people with disabilities and publicises reserves with wheelchair access. In addition, Bo runs a series of birding tours around the world where easy access to great birds is assured. He is currently looking for participants on tours to India and Costa Rica. Visit him at the Birdfair (Marquee 5, stand 14), or contact him by e-mail: bo.beolens@btinternet.com

A&C Black buys Poyser

T & AD Poyser has been publishing bird books since 1973. The company was set up by Trevor and Anna Poyser in response to an acknowledged gap in the market for specialist bird books. Their books quickly gained a deserved reputation for high quality and attention to detail, as well as for their distinctive white jackets and stylish design. In 1990, Trevor and Anna sold their business to Academic Press, itself subsequently taken over by Harcourt Brace and then Elsevier Science. The Poyser list was maintained as a separate entity, publishing monographs, atlases and field guides and, latterly, the new imprint Poyser Natural History.

In July this year, it was announced that A&C Black had acquired the bird and natural history lists of Poyser and Academic Press Natural World from Elsevier Science. The lists will be integrated into the Christopher Helm Ornithology division of A&C Black, under the control of its commissioning editor, Nigel Redman. The acquisition will consolidate the position of the Helm imprint as the world's leading ornithology list. There are a number of mouth-watering titles in the pipeline, none more so than the BTO Migration Atlas, which is due out this autumn, while projects in the next few years include the final volume of *Birds of Africa*, and a companion volume to that series, *The Birds of Madagascar*.

Avocets find safe haven

This year, Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* bred for the first time in Hampshire. Two pairs successfully hatched young, but during June several chicks from both broods were lost, probably taken by a Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*. On the morning of 24th June, only one pair with their two surviving chicks remained, and by that afternoon the breeding site was deserted.

But that was not the end of the story. Incredibly, having left their breeding site, this pair somehow managed to shepherd their two non-flying young several kilometres to Hill Head, near Titchfield Haven Nature Reserve. On the afternoon of 24th June, reserve staff were able to rescue the chicks and carry them into the Haven. The young were followed by their parents while the transfer took place, and by early July both chicks were doing well.

Starlings raise their own funds

Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* in Maryland, USA, have discovered their own cash bonanza, which has already yielded \$4,000! A flock of starlings has discovered a coin-operated carwash in the town of Frederick and



the birds have been entering the change chute and making substantial cash withdrawals. The owner was convinced that a light-fingered employee was emptying his machine and planted a camera to catch the thief in the act. He did: it was a Common Starling with a beak crammed with quarters! A subsequent search of the carwash roof found \$4,000 in loose change.

Link: Utah Birds (www.utahbirds.org/BirdStory.htm).

No Rosy outlook for miserly birders

It has become established practice at most major twitches to hold a whip-round for a deserving local cause, thus benefiting that community *and* making local folk even better disposed to birders should another rarity turn up in the neighbourhood. But this practice can backfire if birders don't put their hands in their pockets. One such case concerned one of the 100+ Rosy Starlings *Sturnus roseus* which invaded Britain this spring and took up residence in a private garden in Runswick Bay, North Yorkshire.

Russell Slack of the *BirdGuides* sightings service takes up the tale: 'We were called by a lady who excitedly told us that she had a superb Rosy Starling in her garden. She was quite happy for people to come to see the bird, but asked if visitors might make a small donation to the building of a bus shelter in the village, a cause for which she had been fundraising for quite some time. The starling stayed for several days and the lady in question allowed a large number of birders into her garden, often at great inconvenience, and even distributed coffee and cakes to those enjoying 'her' bird. Sadly, the donations amounted to a paltry £16.50; £5.00 of which was given by one observer. Many birders refused to make a donation, several were rude, and the garden was left with trampled flowers. She has vowed never to tell anyone again of any unusual birds in her garden and her impression of birdwatchers is now tarnished for ever. If you are prepared to spend tens of pounds on petrol, it is surely not too much to contribute something to a donation bucket.'

We echo Russell's sentiments. The tight-fisted twitchers will be less than pleased if the next bird this lady finds is an Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapillus*...

Link: *BirdGuides* (www.birdguides.com).

Reviews

A GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF WESTERN AFRICA

By Nik Borrow and Ron Demey. Christopher Helm, A&C Black, London, 2002. 832 pages; 147 colour plates; maps. ISBN 0-7136-3959-8. Hardback, £55.00.

Anyone with an interest in West African birds will want to own this book. We have been waiting for some considerable time for someone to produce a modern guide to West African birds, so Nik Borrow and Ron Demey are to be congratulated for completing the task admirably. The geographical scope is wide, extending from the Cape Verde Islands and Mauritania in the west to Chad, CAR and Congo-Brazzaville in the east. A total of 1,285 species is described and all but the very similar indigo-birds *Vidua* are illustrated.

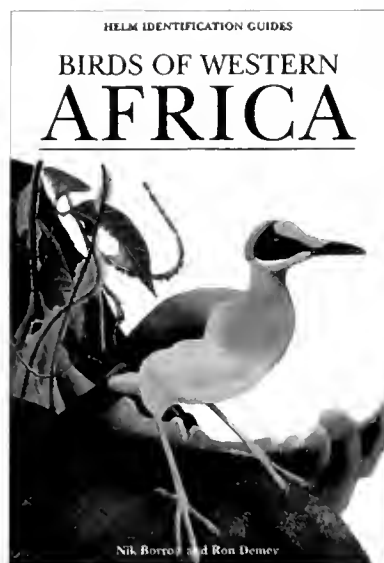
Inevitably, with such an ambitious book, it is large, and is more likely to be carried in a small rucksack than in a pocket. It would have been easier to use if it had been divided into two volumes so that two people walking together could carry one volume each (a much-valued feature of its predecessor, *Birds of West Central and Western Africa*, by Mackworth-Praed & Grant). Hopefully, a pocket version will be planned so that Gérard Morel's confusing English names will finally be consigned to history.

The book is laid out well, with a rather useful introduction occupying 20 pages. This is followed by 296 pages of coloured plates and associated brief notes. The species accounts then occupy 454 pages, each with a coloured distribution map. There are an excellent 20 pages of references, and 32 pages of indexes (in Latin, French and English).

Taxonomic treatment is often contentious nowadays. In this case,

the taxonomic treatment tends to be relatively old-fashioned, particularly with regard to Palearctic migrants. So the now universally recognised Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus brehmii* is only mentioned briefly, without reference to its distinctive call. This is significant because it appears that the entire population may winter in West Africa. More help could be given with differentiating Olivaceous Warblers *Hippolais pallida* of the races *opaca* and *reiseri*, most likely different species, which occur together in Senegal and The Gambia. No mention is made of the similarity of older adult male Pied Flycatchers *Ficedula hypoleuca* of the race *speculigera* (another probable species) to Collared Flycatcher *F. albicollis*. When considering sub-Saharan records of Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*, it would have been helpful to mention the possibility of hybrids with Common Redstart *P. phoenicurus*. On the other hand, the treatment of the indigobirds is up to date, with eight species recognised from the region.

While no one should advocate taxonomic splits just to increase opportunities for listers, it does seem to be the case that many closely related species have historically been overlooked and they tend to present difficult identification problems. These newly recognised species offer significant opportunities for observers to make a real contribution to the fund of knowledge. These are, however, quite minor issues when compared with the birds of the Cape Verde Islands. Hazevoet, in his BOU checklist, argued what seemed to me to be a convincing case for treating many of the small and distinctive populations of birds from those islands as separate species. As the first regional work for several decades that includes the Cape Verde Islands, it is a pity that Borrow & Demey did not feel able to embrace Hazevoet's proposals in this book. Recognition of



these island forms in a major book such as this might have provided some focus for their conservation. It is to be hoped that they will still be extant when the second edition is published.

The term 'vagrant' is often overused, particularly in the case of a species like Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* where its life history and intra-African movements are largely unknown. Generally, however, the distribution maps are first-class and reflect accurately the current state of knowledge. The health warning on page 13, which advises caution when using the maps, is well written, but I wonder if it should have been given greater prominence, as so much remains to be discovered.

A book like this, with limited space, is unlikely to be able to describe the migration of birds well. It is unfortunate, though, that for some species the dates of arrival in autumn are stated to be later than is actually the case.

Any criticisms of the book are, however, minor. It is a splendid achievement for which both authors and publishers should be justly proud. I would urge everyone to buy a copy and, for those who have the opportunity, to use it in Africa to increase knowledge of West African birds.

Stephen Rumsey

**A BIRDER'S GUIDE
TO THE METROPOLITAN
AREAS OF
NORTH AMERICA**

Edited by Paul Lehman.
American Birding Association,
Colorado, 2001.
508 pages; maps;
line-drawings.
ISBN 1-878788-15-9.
Paperback/spiral-bound,
\$28.95.

Most birding site guides deal with a distinct geopolitical region. This book has a different approach, covering 33 metropolitan areas widely scattered across North America. The introduction states that the guide is designed to help both those birders who have a few hours to spare while visiting a city for other reasons (e.g. a business trip), and those planning to spend several days birding around a metropolitan area. Each chapter

includes useful introductory material on topics such as transport, climate, safety, and bird occurrence by season, and then details many of the best birding sites around each city, illustrated with several maps.

Plenty of great sites in or close to cities are covered thoroughly in this guide. Having spent time birding in nearly half the areas dealt with, I found great inconsistency in the treatment of key sites that could be visited in a day or overnight. For example, Point Reyes receives only one sentence in the San Francisco chapter, even though it is undoubtedly the premier day-trip destination for most birders visiting the area (and it is no farther from the city than some other sites which that chapter describes in detail). In other cases, the distances that birders would be willing to drive for such trips were probably underestimated.

Overall, this guide serves the first of its target groups much

better than the second. For the majority of areas covered, birders with time for a couple of days' birding would do better to acquire a good regional site guide, which will include a greater variety of sites, and much more status and distribution information. Only five of the 33 metropolitan areas covered (Calgary, Memphis, Montréal, New Orleans, and Portland) appear to currently lack treatment in a region-specific site guide. This book could, however, be helpful for those who anticipate visiting several of the cities in this guide with minimal time for birding. Even then, only take photocopies of the relevant pages with you, as this guide is quite bulky (more than 500 pages and weighing nearly 900 g). Two separate books, covering eastern and western North America, may have been more practical for many users.

Jon King

BIRDS OF PREY: HEALTH AND DISEASE

By John E. Cooper. Third edition. Blackwell Science, Oxford, 2002.
345 pages; 28 colour plates.
ISBN 0-632-05115-9. Hardback, £59.50.

More raptors are kept, both by individuals and falconry centres, than ever before, and great advances have been made in the diagnosis and treatment of their diseases. This book covers the history of raptor medicine, nomenclature, anatomy, and infectious and non-infectious diseases, as well as the law as it relates to raptors. On the practical side it deals with diagnosis, treatment, anaesthesia and surgery. While primarily intended for the veterinary surgeon and raptor-keeper, two chapters are of more general interest. That on poisoning of wild raptors is relevant to the current reintroduction programmes for White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Red Kite *Milvus milvus* and Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, all of which have suffered mortality by this means, either deliberate or accidental. The chapter on disease in wild populations highlights the difficulty in separating the effects of infection from environmental factors such as food shortage.

This book fulfils the author's aims, and merits attention for the serious ornithologist.

David Warden

**THE ECOLOGY OF THE EGYPTIAN GOOSE
AT HOLKHAM PARK, NORFOLK**

By Bryan Sage. The Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society, Norwich, 2002. 56 pages; 16 colour photographs. Paperback, £1.50.

For a species which has been breeding in England for over 300 years, surprisingly little research has been carried out on the Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*, and only a very small number of papers have appeared. Bryan Sage's booklet is an 'Occasional Publication' of The Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society, a series which has provided a forum for the results of their Wildlife 2000 project.

The booklet details the results of fieldwork carried out by the author between 1986 and 1997 at Holkham. As well as colour photographs, it includes a series of tables and diagrams, all of which enhance the text. The comprehensive bibliography covers all the major references to Egyptian Geese, based on the limited studies that have been carried out in England, as well as some papers from abroad.

I found the text to be highly readable (despite a disappointing number of typos) and most informative, containing, as it does, the most comprehensive information to date on a breeding population of the Egyptian Goose in Britain. I was particularly interested to learn why this species has not spread to the same extent as Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*. At £1.50, it represents excellent value.

Moss Taylor

Monthly Marathon

I have to admit that my first reaction upon seeing photo number 187 (*Brit. Birds* 95: plates 77 & 111; repeated here as plate 254) was 'what an awful photograph!' and to feel a little pity for whoever would have the task of writing a solution. Little did I know, at the time, that the honour would be mine! Many of you, I expect, will have had a similar reaction to me, so – on behalf of readers and competitors in the 'Marathon' – I will direct the following advice to the *BB* Editors, who decided to feature this photograph at this size. The 'best' mystery photographs, I believe, are shots which stimulate curiosity from the viewer, and attract him or her to take a closer look. Ideally, the identity of the bird should not be too obvious, but there should always be at least one or two subtle or easily overlooked clues to the bird's identity in the picture which, when recognised and found to correspond with other images of the same species, can provide the contestant with a great sense of satisfaction. Sometimes, however, the 'mystery' in photos featured in this series is primarily due to an already difficult image being reproduced at such a small size that it allows little in the way of critical analysis. In such cases, contestants may have difficulty deciding what family the bird belongs to, never mind what species! The only consolation is that everyone taking part has the same problem.

When critical scrutiny of an image can get us only so far, we may have to rely on intuition or gut-instinct. There is nothing actually wrong with this, in fact we employ intuition all the time in the field without even being aware of it. In situations where correct identification is crucial – and what could be more crucial than a Monthly Marathon photo – it is unnerving, to say the least, when there is so little means by which we can check our 'instinctive' identification before submitting our solution!



Richard Chandler

254. Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*, Israel, March 1993.

Having said all this, I feel that I should own up to possibly having a significant advantage over some contestants in this case. Having spent a considerable time birding in the Middle East over the past 20 years, I have acquired so much experience of certain species in particular habitats, that I dare say my ability to identify them 'instinctively' is about as developed as it ever will be in my case. Consequently, and for reasons that I am not sure I can unravel, I recognised the bird in this photograph practically instantly, and had little doubt that my instinct was correct. I wish I could now explain exactly *how* I identified the bird, as it would make writing this solution a great deal easier. For a start, the plant *Ochradenus baccatus* providing the perch is a very common plant in arid parts of the Middle East and its berries are an important food source for a variety of *Sylvia* warblers migrating through the region. Using the scale provided by the plant, this looks like a small, warbler-sized bird rather than any of the shrikes (*Laniidae*), which might have come to the minds of some contestants on account of the short, sturdy-looking legs, greyish rump and possibly long tail. As many of you will have deduced, it is one of the *Sylvia* warblers, but which one? The colour of the plant indicates that the photograph is correctly exposed (not something

which can be taken for granted given the intense light that prevails in the region) but the bird still looks rather dark overall. The cast shadows tell us that the light is coming from almost directly overhead, and much of the 'darkness' is, in fact, shadow; the underparts are almost entirely in shadow and half of the grey rump looks black owing to the shadow cast by the slightly raised wing-tips. Such strong shadow might completely mask any flesh or straw tones in the legs and feet but, since it is just possible to detect a hint of green in the shadowed section of the perch, the complete lack of colour in the legs does suggest that we are looking at one of the dark-legged species. The dull, grey-brown mantle, slightly lighter but still dull tertial fringe on the left wing, and the apparently unmarked white undertail-coverts provide some additional, vaguely useful clues. Is that a hint of a very faint pale area around the rear supercilium on the left side? These are just about all of the clues I can discern, or imagine, when I attempt to analyse the photograph. To what extent any of them informed my instant reaction that this looked like a Lesser Whitethroat *S. curruca* I cannot honestly say, but collectively they at least support that impression, so I am sticking with it!

Killian Mullarney

Monthly Marathon

As usual, Killian's sixth sense was working well, and he has correctly identified this Lesser Whitethroat, photographed in Israel by Richard Chandler during March 1993. We note his comments about the size at which Monthly Marathon pictures are reproduced, and will try to ensure that, in future, they are all of sufficient size to permit careful scrutiny!

As the text confirms, this was perhaps one of the most difficult Monthly Marathon photos in recent years, and the degree of difficulty was reflected by the answers submitted by entrants. Only 20% correctly identified no. 187 as a Lesser Whitethroat. Many people thought it was a shrike, and indeed the most popular answer was Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*, which attracted 23% of the vote. Smaller numbers of contestants voted for four other species of shrike and seven other species of warbler, while there were even single votes for Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* and Mourning

Wheatear *O. hogens*. The difficulty of this stage in particular means that only three contestants have correctly identified all three pho-

tographs in this twelfth 'Marathon': Nils van Duivendijk, Jon Holt and Diederik Kok.

Eds



255. 'Monthly Marathon'. Photo no. 190. Sixth stage in twelfth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules (see page 36), then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, c/o The Banks, Mountfield, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JY, or by e-mail to editor@britishbirds.co.uk, to arrive by 30th September 2002.

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Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary of unchecked reports covers mid June to mid July 2002.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* Off St Kilda (Western Isles), 12th June. **Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis* Flamborough Head (East Yorkshire), 5th July. **Wilson's Storm-petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* One, 13 km south of St Mary's (Seilly), 27th June; three, 14 km south of St Mary's, 5th July, with a single in the same area on 8th July, and two on 10th July. **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* Budleigh Salterton (Devon), 20th June. **Great White**

Egret *Egretta alba* River Deben (Suffolk), 19th June; Hoo Peninsula (Kent), 25th June; Morston (Norfolk), 29th June. **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* Great Ryburgh (Norfolk), 24th June. **Canvasback** *Aythya valisineria* Pennington Flash (Greater Manchester), 11th-14th July.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* In addition to those reported last month, there were singles at Gringley Carr (Nottinghamshire) on 12th-17th June, Hickling (Norfolk) on 3rd-14th July, and Martin Down (Hampshire) on 6th July. **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* North

Phil Palmer



256. First-summer female Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, Gringley Carr, Nottinghamshire, June 2002.

Ronaldsay (Orkney), 8th-9th July. Semi-palmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* Loch of Tankerness (Orkney), 28th-29th June. White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* Cresswell Pond (Northumberland), 30th June; Kelling (Norfolk), 6th July; Cowpen Marsh (Cleveland), 13th July. Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* Cleethorpes (Lincolnshire), 10th July. Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* Dorman's Pool and Saltholme Pools (both Cleveland), 15th-16th June. Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* Blacktoft Sands (East Yorkshire), 12th-14th July. Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* Derwent Reservoir (Co. Durham/ Northumberland), 19th June to 6th July. Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* Lough Neagh (Co. Armagh), 8th July. Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* Breydon Water (Norfolk), 23rd June; Lakenheath Washes (Norfolk/Suffolk), 26th-27th June. White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* Saltholme Pools, 10th June; Lough Neagh, 8th July; Whitburn (Co. Durham), 10th July.

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* Swanage (Dorset), 15th-17th June; Giant's Causeway (Co. Antrim), 20th June; Sheringham (Norfolk), 20th June; two, Fair Head (Co. Antrim), 25th and 27th June. Little Swift *Apus affinis* Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire), 25th June. Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* Foula (Shetland), 13th July. Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* Church Norton (West Sussex), 20th June. Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* Porthgwarra (Cornwall), 26th June. Woodchat



Frank Golding

257. European Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster*, Bishop Middleham (Co. Durham), June 2002. In addition to those mentioned last month, over 60 were reported in Britain during the period June-July 2002, although this figure will inevitably include some double-counting of the same individuals and groups. The largest group was of six birds, seen at Brundall, Hingham and Wroxham (all Norfolk) on 14th July. The pair at Middleham were present throughout June, and became the first nesting bee-eaters in Britain for almost 50 years. An account of the breeding attempt is in preparation for *British Birds*.

Shrike *Lanius senator* In addition to those reported last month: one between Barr and Dailly (Ayrshire), 10th-11th June; Culver Down (Isle of Wight), 15th June; Titchfield Haven (Hampshire), 24th June; Foula, 9th-14th July.

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* A record influx of Rosy Starlings occurred during June and early July. In addition to those reported last month, the following summary gives minimum numbers seen in British counties between mid June and mid July: Highland 9; Cornwall 7; Devon 6; Lothian 6; Norfolk 6; North Yorkshire 6; Shetland 6; Fife 4; West Midlands 4; Dorset 3; Seilly 3; Angus 2; Argyll 2; Ayrshire 2; Cumbria 2; Essex 2; Lincolnshire 2; Orkney 2; Somerset 2; West Sussex 2; Cheshire 1; Cleveland 1; Conwy 1; Derbyshire 1; East Yorkshire 1; Glamorgan 1; Hampshire 1; Islay 1; Isle of Man 1; Kent 1; Lancashire 1; Merseyside 1; Moray 1; Northeast Scotland 1; Northumberland 1; Shropshire 1; Staffordshire 1; Western Isles 1. Furthermore, no fewer than 23 were seen in Ireland during June and July, widely scattered in coastal areas but with none reported inland. A maximum of three were seen together on Cape Clear (Co. Cork) in late June, with a new individual there in early July.

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* Vidlin (Shetland), 13th-14th July. Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* Southport (Lancashire), 19th and 23rd June.

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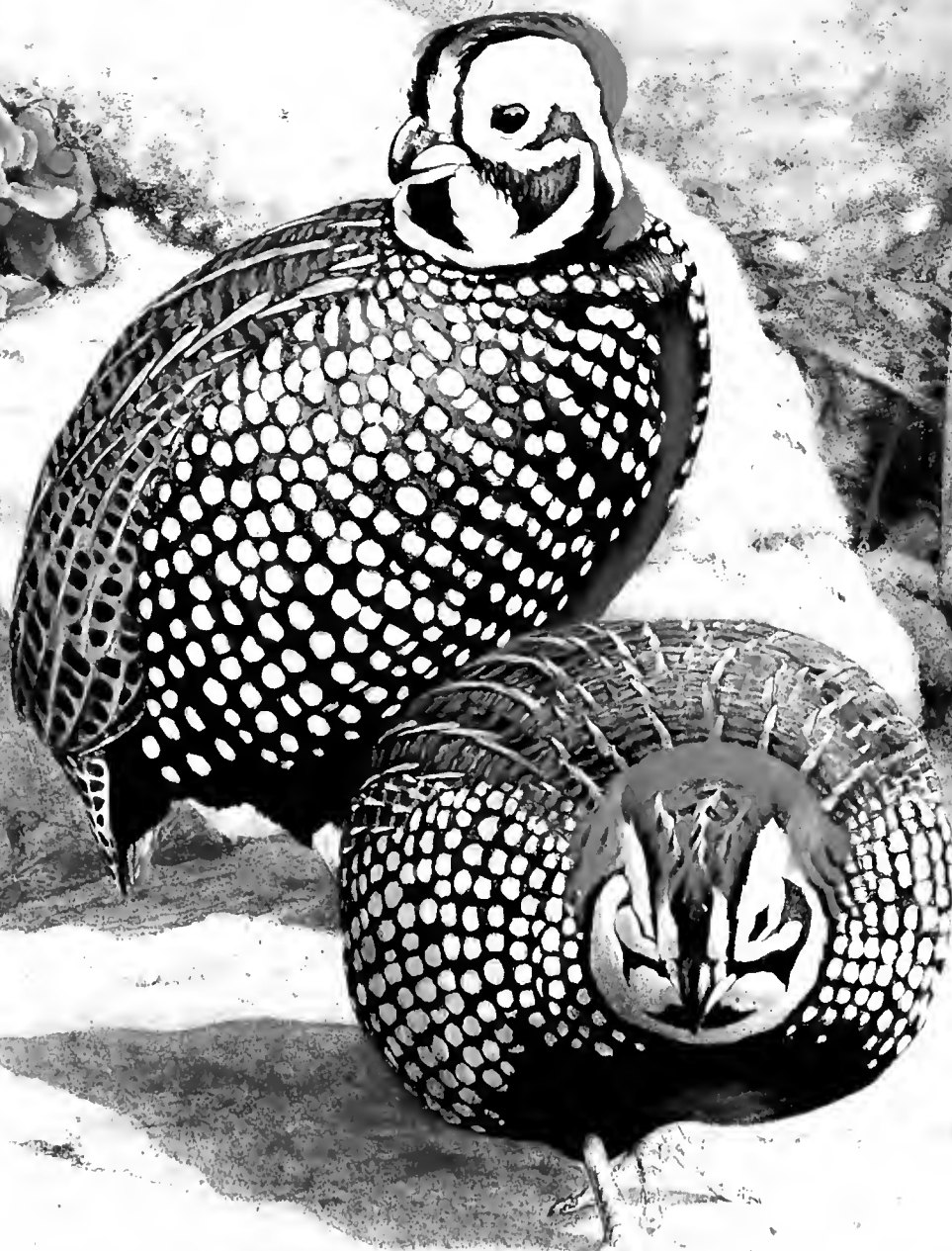
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British Birds

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The population
status of birds
in the UK

White-winged
Black Tern



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
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Volume 95 Number 9 September 2002

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The population status of birds in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man:

an analysis of conservation concern 2002-2007

*Richard D. Gregory, Nicholas I. Wilkinson,
David G. Noble, James A. Robinson,
Andrew F. Brown, Julian Hughes, Deborah Procter,
David W. Gibbons and Colin A. Galbraith*

ABSTRACT This is the third assessment of the population status of birds in the UK. The listing criteria are based on global conservation status, historical population declines, recent population declines (both in numbers and in geographical range), European conservation status, breeding rarity, localised distribution, and the international importance of populations. For consistency, the criteria follow closely those used by previous reviews, with minor modifications where new information or methods are available. We have assessed the population status of 247 species in the UK: 40 (c. 16%) were placed on the 'Red list', 121 (c. 49%) on the 'Amber list', and 86 (c. 35%) on the 'Green list'. The number of Red-listed species has increased by four, and the number of Amber-listed species by eleven since the previous review in 1996. Nine new species have been added to the Red list because of declines in their breeding populations, while thirty-one species have remained Red listed. Five species have moved from the Red to the Amber list because their populations have more than doubled in the last 25 years.

Introduction

Red data lists for birds exist at a number of levels, from global (e.g. BirdLife International 2000) to national (e.g. Batten *et al.* 1990; Gibbons *et al.* 1996a; JNCC 1996), but have the shared aim of identifying population status changes and, where possible, focusing finite

resources on the most pressing conservation priorities. The then Nature Conservancy Council and the RSPB published the first national Red list for British birds in 1990 (Batten *et al.* 1990). *Red Data Birds in Britain* used a series of largely quantitative criteria to judge the conservation status of each species. These criteria included the



Mike Lane

258. Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*. A species which is new to the Red list, owing to the decline in its breeding population.

international importance of populations, the rarity of breeding species, population decline, localised distribution, and special concern. The list was subsequently updated and expanded, and published as *Birds of Conservation Concern* ('BoCC': Gibbons *et al.* 1996a) and *Birds of Conservation Importance* ('BoCI': JNCC 1996), which considered a wider range of qualifying criteria by virtue of improved data availability in both the UK and continental Europe. The revised listing considered population size and geographical range decline, historical population decline, rarity of breeding species, localised distribution, international importance, and both global and European conservation concern. Arguably, the most important advance in BoCC/BoCI, beyond the application of quantitative criteria, was the recognition that declines among widespread and common species should be reflected in the final listings. The main effect was to recognise the plight of a suite of species characteristic of farmland (see, for example, Aebischer *et al.* 2000).

We are fortunate that, in comparison with many other countries, the UK has a relatively long history of surveying and monitoring its birds; much of the data collection has been carried out by skilled volunteers. It is precisely because of this unparalleled volume and quality

of data on population status and distribution that we are able to produce a list based on quantitative, rather than qualitative, criteria. Lists of population status need to be updated regularly to remain useful, and this paper provides a five-year update on BoCC/BoCI, as envisaged by Gibbons *et al.* (1996a) and JNCC (1996).

In producing a new list, the first task for the governmental and non-governmental organisations leading the project was to review the original listing criteria and consider alternative approaches. The most widely used guidelines of this kind are those published by the World Conservation Union (IUCN 2001) which quantify extinction probabilities and global conservation status for all taxa. We have used IUCN's official listings of global threats to birds (BirdLife International 2000) as an integral part of this review. The specific time frames, levels of population decline and thresholds for population size differ between the global criteria and those used in this paper because the IUCN criteria relate solely to extinction probability. In response to growing demand from individual countries, the IUCN is developing guidelines for the application of Red-list criteria at national and regional levels, although so far they have been applied in only

a relatively small number of cases (Gärdenfors 2001; Gärdenfors *et al.* 2001; Keller & Bollmann 2001).

A second approach, which has been adopted in North America, is the 'Partners in Flight Prioritisation Plan' (Beissinger *et al.* 2000; Carter *et al.* 2000). This system builds on earlier assessments of conservation concern known as 'Blue Lists' or 'Watch Lists', and sets out to apply quantitative and objective criteria to the available information. The criteria echo those used elsewhere and include geographical distribution, rarity, population trends, area importance, and perceived threats. There are many interesting features within the American system, such as the use of yearly rates of population change rather than trends over fixed periods, the use of statistical significance of these trends, and the consideration of species threat. Nonetheless, there appears to be no obvious advantage over the methods used by Gibbons *et al.* (1996a) and JNCC (1996), while there is

much to be gained by maintaining continuity in the UK. In addition, while 'Partners in Flight' considers some aspects of international responsibility within the Americas, it does not consider them outside that area, and does not refer to the IUCN listings.

At the outset, it is important to distinguish between the assessment of extinction risk or population status (such as the IUCN and BoCC/BoCI lists) and any consequent setting of conservation priorities. The IUCN recommends that conservation priorities be set independently of population status and using additional criteria (Gärdenfors 2001; Gärdenfors *et al.* 2001). A priority list for conservation action should first take the biological information on population status and then consider additional factors, such as: the availability of funds or personnel to carry out actions; legal frameworks for the conservation of species; ecological, phylogenetic, historical, or cultural preferences for species; whether species are dependent on conservation action; expedience and opportunity for action; the likelihood of conservation success; and the degree to which species might act as flagships or be totemic of conservation action. It is important to note that, regarding this paper, any consequent setting of conservation priorities will need to take account of these factors.

In this paper, we review the population status of birds in the UK, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. We use seven quantitative criteria, based upon the previous assessments (Gibbons *et al.* 1996a; JNCC 1996), to assess the status of each species which occurs regularly, and place them on one of three lists. The simple categorisation of species as 'Red', 'Amber', or 'Green' gives one indication of the overall population status which, taken together with other information, should inform the setting of conservation priorities. Species which are 'Red listed' are those which are Globally Threatened, whose population or range has declined



George McCarthy

259. Marsh Tit *Parus palustris*. A woodland species which is now Red listed by virtue of its declining breeding population.

rapidly in recent years, or which have declined historically and have not shown a recent substantial recovery. A species is 'Amber listed' if it has any of the following: an unfavourable population status in Europe; a very small population size; a population which has declined moderately over recent decades; distribution localised to a small number of sites; or if it occurs in internationally important numbers. In this way, the 'Red list' describes the population trends of the species, while the 'Amber list' describes both population status and UK international responsibility for populations.

One important function of the listings is to highlight the need for appropriate population monitoring. A monitoring framework is required which is able to detect future population changes in all species, although specific attention might be paid to comprehensive monitoring of Red-list species. Green-listed species will require a basic conservation provision (including site protection where appropriate, and population monitoring). For example, Smew *Mergellus albellus*, and European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* are on Annex I of the EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds, but Green listed by this review.

By following the methods of BoCC/BoCI, we can be confident that changes in the listings reflect true changes in population status and not changes in criteria (except where these are altered as a result of recent detailed examination of the data and consultation during the revision process). Others have adopted the methods we describe; for example, a review of population status in Ireland has been published recently (Newton *et al.* 1999).

In revising this list, we have been aware that the listing, when taken with the additional factors outlined above, might have important consequences for the priority accorded to monitoring requirements and conservation action for these species by government and non-governmental organisations. The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) has adopted this objective review as one element of its ongoing *Species Status Assessment Programme*, which will in turn help to inform the revision of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

Species list

Our assessment covered all species on the most recent British Ornithologists' Union checklist (BOU 2001), excluding species which occur

solely as vagrants (considered by the British Birds Rarities Committee), or scarce migrants (listed by Fraser *et al.* 1997, 1999, 2000); and species introduced by Man, either deliberately or accidentally, which have established self-sustaining breeding populations (listed as 'Category C' species by the BOU). Globally Threatened species (BirdLife International 2000) which have occurred in the UK at least once in each of the last 25 years were included in the analysis (Corn Crake *Crex crex*, Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* and Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica*). This criterion was designed to ensure that some of the world's most threatened species were evaluated, while excluding those species which, even if they occur occasionally as vagrants, could not be effectively targeted for conservation action in the UK.

The assessment is based on full species, rather than subspecies, races or distinct geographical populations. Where data are available for geographically discrete goose populations, however, we have made comparable assessments for these since they are often recognised for conservation action.



E. A. James

260. Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedipnemos*. This species remains Red listed, because of a contraction in its breeding range, but is responding well to recent conservation action.

Methods

Listing criteria

The new list uses seven quantitative criteria to determine population status. These criteria assess the status of species based on global conservation status, recent population decline (both in numbers and geographical range), historical population decline, European conservation status, breeding rarity, localised distribution, and international importance. 'Recent decline' is taken to refer to the last 25 years, and we distinguish between rapid ($\geq 50\%$ change over this period) and moderate (25–49.9%) declines in numbers or range to define Red- and Amber-list species respectively. For a small number of species, information on population trends is only available for periods shorter or longer than 25 years and we retain the same numerical thresholds for these, for the sake of simplicity and the greater importance attached to the magnitude of the decline.

Global conservation status (IUCN)

QUALIFICATION IUCN Globally Threatened:
Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable = Red list

This criterion assesses the conservation status of each species at a global scale. In essence, it puts the UK status of a species into a global context and has been used as an independent rationale for judging national status. We have used the most up-to-date assessment of Globally Threatened species, as published in *Threatened Birds of the World* (BirdLife International 2000), to identify UK species of global conservation concern.

Recent Population Decline

Decline in breeding population (BDp, BDMp)
QUALIFICATION Population decline $\geq 50\%$ over 25 years = Red list; 25–49.9% over 25 years = Amber list

To determine the population trend for each breeding species, we used data from a variety of surveys and monitoring schemes. These included the BTO/JNCC Common Birds Census (CBC) and Waterways Bird Survey (WBS), the BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), the JNCC/RSPB/SOTEAG/Seabird Group/Statutory Agencies Seabird 2000, data from the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP), and single-species surveys, mostly conducted under the Statutory Conservation Agencies and RSPB Annual

Breeding Bird Scheme (SCARABBS) Agreement. These data were used in the following manner to assess whether species qualified as declining breeders.

Common Birds Census (CBC)

Population trends using CBC indices were based on data from all CBC plots combined – 'farmland', 'woodland' and 'special' (mainly heathland and wetland) – between 1966 and 2000. Population changes were estimated using a Generalised Additive Model (GAM), a type of log-linear regression model which incorporates a smoothing function (Fewster *et al.* 2000). Counts were modelled as the product of site and year effects, on the assumption that between-year changes were homogenous across plots. 'Smoothing' was used to remove the effects of short-term fluctuations (e.g. those caused by periods of severe weather) in order to reveal the underlying pattern of population change. In this analytical method, the endpoints of the derived smoothed plots are excluded from the trends. Thus, although the full run of data from 1966–2000 is required to derive the annual indices, the population trends cover the 25-year period 1974–1999. These methods represent a considerable refinement over the quadratic regressions used by Gibbons *et al.* (1996a), and some of the changes may reflect more appropriate and accurate models.

We have used the population trends for all species routinely monitored by the CBC, although we have been conscious of the uneven geographical distribution of sampling plots in the UK. For some species, the CBC may provide only a small or unrepresentative sample of its national population and this will affect the level of precision and bias of the population trends. Those species trends that were simply based on small sample sizes have been used without qualification. This is because there is no reason to believe that they are wrong (i.e. biased), even though they may be imprecise because of low samples. The same may not be true, however, where the CBC monitors an unrepresentative part of the species population. To determine whether this was the case, we have used the measures of abundance from the *New Atlas* (Gibbons *et al.* 1993) to assess how representative CBC trends were. The ratio of the mean abundance over all 10-km squares, to the mean abundance in 10-km squares containing CBC plots, was calculated for each species (see table 7,

'correction ratio'; Gibbons *et al.* 1993). A species whose correction ratio was greater than or equal to 1.0 (e.g. Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*) occurred mainly in areas without CBC plots, and so the CBC would be unlikely to represent national trends in population levels. CBC trends were likely to be representative for species whose correction ratio was less than 1.0 (i.e. CBC plots encompassed the species' range well). In our assessment, species for which the CBC trend was unrepresentative have not been admitted to the Red list, even if the CBC indicated a decline of more than 50% over the 25-year period. This is because there are good reasons to believe the trend may be a biased representation of its true, but unmeasured, UK trend. Because the true rate of decline could be less, similar to, or more severe than that measured, however, these species have been admitted to the Amber list as a precautionary measure.

We could have followed the general principle of placing species with unrepresentative declines of more than 50% on the Amber list rather than on the Red list, by placing all those with unrepresentative declines of 25-49.9% on the Green list. We have not done this because we feel that these declines might, at least in part, be real. If such species were Green listed, their true status may be overlooked for some time to come.

Waterways Bird Survey (WBS)

Population trends from WBS indices were based on data from all plots between 1974-2000. The data were analysed in the same manner as for CBC data, using a GAM with a smoothing function which removes short-term fluctuations to reveal the underlying pattern of population change. As for the CBC data, the endpoints of the smoothed plots were excluded, so the change in population indices is for the 24-year period 1975-99.

Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)

BBS data were examined because they have the potential to identify important population trends for species which are poorly covered by the CBC, even though they represent only a short run of data. Population trends using BBS indices were based on data for the six-year period 1994-2000 (the full dataset available). Counts of each species were summarised for each 1-km square surveyed and then analysed

using a log-linear regression model with full year and site effects to estimate annual indices (Noble *et al.* 2000). The trends were not smoothed because this was considered inappropriate given the short run of data. These indices incorporate a weighting factor to correct for differences in survey coverage between regions. The extent of population change was calculated for each species as the percentage change between the index for 1994 and 2000.

The population trends of species that were based on data from the CBC, WBS or BBS were used in a hierarchical manner. We first used the CBC trends to assign listings, except for four riparian species whose populations were not well monitored by the CBC and whose listings were based solely on their WBS trend (Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*, Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* and Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*). Where the CBC trends were subject to data caveats (i.e. unrepresentative samples), the trends based on WBS or BBS were explored. If either the WBS or BBS trends were judged more appropriate (in terms of being representative), these were then used in our assessment; otherwise the CBC trend was used. These choices were led by data quality and not by a precautionary approach, which in this instance might alter the status of species incorrectly.

Alternative data sources were investigated for five CBC species whose trends might not be representative. For example, Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* showed a 2% increase on CBC plots and a 57% decline on WBS plots over roughly the same period. In this case, both sources are biased towards particular habitat types, and the CBC trend was retained in the assessment. Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* and Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* show very strong declines on CBC plots, but they have been Amber listed on the basis of these data because of small sample sizes in recent years and because of particular concerns over habitat and geographical representation (table 7). In the case of these three species, breeding Common Redshanks are found mainly on saltmarsh and significant populations of Woodcock and Common Snipe breed in northern Britain, which are habitats and areas not well covered by the CBC. For Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*, the CBC trend suggests a moderate decline, whereas the WBS, having a more

northerly distribution, which is arguably more representative of its breeding habitat, shows strong gains. We have, therefore, used the WBS trend in our assessment.

Seabird trends

Breeding seabirds in the UK are monitored by two closely related schemes. The first is a census of all breeding seabirds, undertaken approximately every 15 years: 1969-70 (Cramp *et al.* 1974), 1985-88 (Lloyd *et al.* 1991) and 1998-2001 (Mitchell *et al.* in prep.). Population changes were assessed over the longest period for which comparable data were available, i.e. either from 1969/70 to 1998/01, or from 1985/88 to 1998/01. The second scheme, the Seabird Monitoring Programme, was instigated in 1986 to measure change at a sample of colonies throughout the UK on an annual basis (Reid 2000; Tasker 2000). Trend information was drawn from the most appropriate source, or sources.

Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP)

Population trends from the RBBP were based on data for 1973-99: the period over which the Panel has operated and published its results. Trends were calculated for each of the species monitored by the Panel for which there was at least one confirmed breeding pair (where 'breeding' is defined as, at least, the laying of presumed fertile eggs) during the most recent five-year period 1995-99 (i.e. species qualifying under the breeding rarity category, see below). This excludes transient breeders, i.e. species nesting very irregularly and with many years between nesting attempts (e.g. Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Hoopoe *Upupa epops*), which are not an established part of the UK's breeding avifauna. Means of the maximum total number of pairs (or occasionally more relevant units; see table 9) were calculated for the 1973-77 and 1995-99 five-year periods. Population change was then calculated as the percentage change between the two five-year means. Five-year means have been used because they smooth the inter-annual variation in numbers, thus making the percentage change estimates more reliable. Inevitably, this reduces the mean time interval over which the population trend is measured to 22 years, although data from 27 years, 1973 to 1999, were used.

Single-species surveys

Many species are too rare to be reliably

monitored by the CBC, WBS and BBS, yet are too common to be covered by the RBBP. For many of these species (e.g. Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*), customised single-species surveys have been undertaken, often repeated at varying time intervals. Population trends based on data from comparable surveys of single species were calculated over the longest period available, since many of these species lack 25-year trends. For Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedipnemus*, the population trend covered the 30-year period 1970-2000, with the estimate of population size from the first breeding atlas (Sharrock 1976) providing the 1970 estimate, and an annual census the 2000 estimate. For this species, although a 30-year trend was available, a 25-year trend was not. Where a species was surveyed in only part of its UK range, population change was assessed using data from only those geographical areas covered by both surveys (e.g. Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata* in Shetland). The degree of population change was calculated for each species as the percentage change in the population estimates between the two surveys.

A small number of species lack either co-ordinated UK-wide, or comparable survey data. For two such species, Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* and Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*, we have used a variety of population data to assess population change.

Decline in breeding range (BDr, BDMr)

QUALIFICATION Range decline $\geq 50\%$ over 25 years = Red list; 25-49.9% over 25 years = Amber list

To assess changes in geographical range, we used data from the two atlases of breeding birds in Britain & Ireland (Sharrock 1976; Gibbons *et al.* 1993). Although now ten years old, Gibbons *et al.* (1993) provides the only recent data on geographical range for the majority of species breeding in the UK. Where available, we have used more recent complete census data to assess distributional change over a longer period. In addition, comprehensive surveys are carried out annually for some species (e.g. Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus* and Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*), and we have used the most recent data available. For those species that were not surveyed throughout their entire UK range (e.g. Corn Crake), the assessment used data from only those geographical areas covered during both survey periods. Comparison of bird distributions assessed 20 years apart using slightly different methods is problematic. Overall,

survey coverage during the two atlases was comparable in Britain as a whole, although there was regional variation (Gibbons *et al.* 1993). Hence, distributional change was assessed as follows. Changes in range using data from the two breeding atlases cover the 20-24-year period between 1968-72 and 1988-91. For each species, we calculated the percentage change in the number of occupied 10-km squares in the UK (breeding 'confirmed', 'probable' or 'possible' for the 1968-72 *Atlas* and 'breeding' or 'seen' for the 1988-91 *New Atlas*). We excluded those species which occurred in 20 or fewer 10-km squares during both *Atlas* periods, because the percentage change calculations can lead to artificially high or low values. In calculating the range change, we used only those 10-km squares that were covered during both periods. In addition, the Channel Islands (Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney, Sark and Herm) and Fair Isle, Shetland, were treated as six single 10-km squares, even though in total the islands actually cover 18 10-km squares, in order to allow comparison between the two atlases (see p. 18 of Gibbons *et al.* 1993 for more details). Because seabirds frequently occur away from their breeding colonies, only 10-km squares with evidence of breeding ('probable' or 'confirmed' in 1968-72, and 'breeding' in 1988-91) were used to assess changes in distribution for these species.

More recent complete census data (i.e. covering all of the breeding range) were available for 13 species (Slavonian Grebe, Great Bittern, Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*, Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*, Corn Crake, Stone-curlew, Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, Roseate Tern *Sterna dongallii*, European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*, Rufous Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*, Crested Tit *Parus cristatus* and Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*). Changes in distribution were calculated for each of these species in a similar manner to that outlined above, using data from the 1968-72 *Atlas* as the baseline and comparing the number of occupied 10-km squares ('possible', 'probable' or 'confirmed')

for both time periods. As for other seabirds, for Roseate Tern only 10-km squares with evidence of breeding ('probable' or 'confirmed' for both time periods) were used. Similarly, range change for Corn Crake has been based on records of 10-km squares with evidence of breeding only (see, for example, Green & Gibbons 2000).

As the estimates of geographical distribution from the 1968-72 *Atlas* are an accumulated pattern over a five-year period, the documented range of some species may have been greater than would have been recorded by a census in a single year. Range loss may thus be exaggerated when comparing the *Atlas* with a recent census undertaken in a single year. Conversely, all recent single-species surveys have been carried out by surveyors dedicated to that species alone, while fieldworkers for the 1968-72 *Atlas* were expected to record all species in their grid square. In general, we are unable to take account of these changes in survey effort, although Green & Gibbons (2000) have assessed



Chris Gomersall

261. Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* remains on the Red list.

the extent of this potential bias by estimating the Corn Crake's range in a single year around 1970. This was then compared with the most recent complete census in 1998. Unfortunately, we have been unable to perform such analyses for the remaining 12 species.

Decline in population during the non-breeding season (WDp, WDMp)

QUALIFICATION Population decline $\geq 50\%$ over 25 years = Red list; 25-49.9% over 25 years = Amber list

To assess the population trends of species during the non-breeding season, we used data from the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) and co-ordinated Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust/JNCC goose counts. Data are available for a number of waterbirds, principally wildfowl and waders. Population-trend data are lacking for most terrestrial species outside the breeding season, although most species that winter in the UK also breed here.

Population trends using WeBS indices were based on data for the 25-year period from winter 1974/75 to winter 1999/2000. The WeBS count data were smoothed using a GAM to remove year-to-year variation and so reveal the underlying population trend (Atkinson & Rehfish 2000). The level of population change was calculated for each species as the percentage

change in the smoothed index between 1974/75 and 1999/2000.

Population trends of Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus*, Greylag Geese *Anser anser* from Iceland, Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* from both Svalbard and Greenland, and light-bellied Brent Geese *Branta bernicla hrota* from Svalbard, none of which are adequately monitored by WeBS, were based on data from co-ordinated goose counts. Trends were based on the maximum number of birds counted because these regular censuses record almost the entire population during the non-breeding season in the UK. For these species, population change was calculated as the percentage change in the total count between 1974 and 1999. For Greenland White-fronted Geese *Anser albifrons flavirostris* and East Canadian light-bellied Brent Geese, the population trends were based on data for the period between 1986/87 and 1999/2000 and the period from 1982/83 to 1999/2000 respectively, the periods during which reliable monitoring data were available.

Population trends were not calculated for several species monitored by WeBS (divers, grebes, Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, herons, seaducks, rails, waders, gulls, terns and Common Kingfisher) because it is not known whether the counts are representative of national numbers.



262. Great Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*. One of two species of wader (the other is Dunlin *Calidris alpina*) which are now Amber listed because of declining populations during the non breeding season.

Historical decline in breeding population

(HD, HDrec)

QUALIFICATION Severe historical population decline during 1800-1995 = Red list

The time period of 25 years is relatively short for assessing population trends, and is designed to capture current and ongoing conservation issues. This is also partly based on pragmatism because few major monitoring schemes existed before the 1960s. It would thus be possible for a species to have undergone a large population decline over the last two centuries, but for its population to have remained stable over the last two decades. Such a species would not qualify as a declining breeding species and would not be considered a species of concern, even though current population levels are very much lower than 200 years ago. To assess historical population trends for each species, we used the assessment of status given by Gibbons *et al.* (1996b). Building upon earlier reviews, the population trend for each species, in each of five time periods during 1800-1995, was assessed using an ordinal system, from -5 ('huge and widespread decline') to +5 ('spectacular increase'), following Alexander & Lack (1944), and Parslow (1973) (see table 1; Gibbons *et al.* 1996b). The overall population trend during 1800-1995 was calculated as the sum of scores across all five time periods. Although this system involved a semi-quantification of qualitative assessments, it allowed a comparison of trends between species and, importantly, it was possible to determine those species whose breeding populations had declined most since 1800. Those extant species whose overall population trend was less than or equal to -10 qualified as historically declining species in both the original BoCC/BoCI listings, and in this review (though with a few exceptions, outlined below).

Given the manner in which this historical trend was calculated, it is difficult for any species to leave this category, and hence the list, for many decades. Thus, we have introduced the following sub-criteria to identify species that should, by virtue of more recent population recovery, move from Red to Amber (i.e. HDrec).

- Species have been moved from Red to Amber if their population size has more than doubled in the last 25 years, providing that they had met a minimum threshold (in this review we have taken this to be 100 breeding pairs), and were not classified by

IUCN as Globally Threatened.

- In future revisions, we recommend that species could be moved from Amber to Green if they do not qualify for listing under any other criteria (e.g. localised or rare breeder), and their population continues to recover (i.e. numbers increase by $\geq 20\%$ between this and the next review).
- A species which had declined historically would move back on to the Red list if its modern population recovery falters (i.e. numbers decrease by $\geq 20\%$ between this and the next review).

These sub-criteria for moving species off the list of historically declining species are designed to recognise conservation success, while not jeopardising the status of fragile populations or ignoring international responsibilities.

*European conservation status (SPEC 2 & 3)**QUALIFICATION SPEC 2 & 3 = at least Amber list*

This criterion assesses the conservation status of each species in a European context. The conservation status of all European birds was assessed in *Birds in Europe* (Tucker & Heath 1994; this assessment is currently being revised). Four categories of conservation concern were recognised and are known as Species of European Conservation Concern (SPECs). SPEC1 species are of global conservation concern, SPEC2 species are of unfavourable status and concentrated in Europe (more than 50% of the world population or range in Europe), and SPEC3 species are of unfavourable status but not concentrated in Europe. The criteria for SPEC status include rarity, localisation and decline in Europe, and can apply to both breeding and non-breeding populations (Tucker & Heath 1994). Species classed as either SPEC2 or SPEC3 have been placed on the Amber list, except for four species (Smew, Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus*, Little Gull *Larus minutus*, and Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*), which occur only as non-breeding species in the UK.

*Breeding rarity (BR)**QUALIFICATION less than 300 pairs = at least Amber list*

To determine which species qualified as rare breeders, we used data from Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP) reports (Ogilvie *et al.* 1998, 1999a & b, 2000, 2001), from single-species surveys and from Seabird 2000 data. Only those species reported by the RBBP for which there

was at least one confirmed breeding pair (see above) during the five-year period 1995-99 were assessed. Population size was calculated for each as the mean of the maximum total number of pairs (or occasionally more relevant units; see table 9) during the five-year period 1995-99; the latter being the most recent year of reporting available. Species qualified under this criterion with a mean of 1-300 breeding pairs. The use of a five-year running mean avoids having continually to rewrite the list following annual changes in population levels, yet enables the list to be sufficiently responsive to change. Inevitably, it means that rare species with increasing populations will remain as rare breeders even though their populations have passed 300 pairs in the most recent year or years. This may, however, be advisable since it is a precautionary approach. Recent information was available for a small number of species from intensive or systematic surveys. For these species (e.g. Red Kite *Milvus milvus*, Roseate Tern, and Cirl Bunting), we used the estimates of UK population size derived from these surveys, rather than the five-year means based on RBBP data, to assess whether they qualified as rare breeders.

Localised breeding (BL) and non-breeding species (WL)

QUALIFICATION $\geq 50\%$ of the breeding or non-breeding population occurs at ten or fewer sites = at least Amber list

This criterion was used because a species with a population confined to a small number of sites faces a greater threat from chance events (either natural or anthropogenic) than a more widespread species. Rare breeders were not considered as localised breeding species because their populations are, generally, highly localised anyway.

We undertook two separate analyses to determine how localised each species was during the breeding and non-breeding seasons. Both were aimed at determining what proportion of the UK population occurs at the ten best sites for each species, in each season. In the first analysis, we defined each of these sites as an Important Bird Area (IBA) (Heath & Evans 2000). In the second, we defined each site as a Special Protection Area (SPA) (Stroud *et al.* 2001).

In the first analysis, the sum of counts at the ten most important IBAs for each species was calculated for each relevant season (breeding

and non-breeding), and then divided by the estimated UK population size, again for the relevant season. We also assessed the counts of species on passage for the small number of wader species with UK population estimates. We ignored the counts of non-breeding flocks during the breeding season in this analysis, however, because UK population estimates of this component of the population are lacking. This process was then repeated using SPA data. A species qualified as localised when the resulting value was greater than or equal to 0.5 for IBAs and/or SPAs. We have taken care to use the most recent estimates of UK population size for each species in each relevant season (Stone *et al.* 1997; BirdLife International/European Bird Census Council 2000), but updated for wildfowl (Kershaw & Cranswick in prep. for Britain, and five-year-mean peak WeBS counts for Northern Ireland) and waders (Rehfishch *et al.* in prep.). For some species, the UK population estimates were presented as ranges, and so it was possible to calculate a minimum and a maximum value for the percentage of the UK population occurring on the ten best sites. Only if both the maximum and minimum values were greater than or equal to 0.5, did the species qualify for this criterion.

Each of these two approaches, one using IBA data, the other using SPA data, has advantages and disadvantages. The IBA data include counts of all species (with the exception of common and widespread ones) on all sites, yet the data are somewhat out of date, mostly from the early to mid 1990s. Some IBA 'sites' are also extremely large (e.g. more than 230,000 ha). The SPA data are slightly more up to date, but cover only those species for which the site has been designated as an SPA. Species could qualify based on either IBA or SPA data because both are comprehensive national assessments of networks of important sites.

International importance during the breeding (BI) or non-breeding (WI) season

QUALIFICATION $\geq 20\%$ of the European breeding or non-breeding population occurs in the UK = at least Amber list

Breeding species are considered to occur in internationally important numbers if 20% or more of the European population breeds in the UK. To put this figure into context, the UK is about 2.5% of the European land mass. To assess whether species occur in internationally

important numbers during the breeding season, we used the estimates of European and UK breeding population sizes from *European bird populations: estimates and trends* (BirdLife International/European Bird Census Council 2000). Where more up-to-date estimates are available for the UK, we have used these, and adjusted the European population estimates accordingly. Using these data, we calculated the proportion of the European population that breeds in the UK for each species. For some species, the European (and in some cases the UK) breeding population estimates were presented as maximum and minimum values. Only if both the maximum and minimum values of the percentage of the European population breeding in the UK were greater than or equal to 20% did species qualify under this criterion.

Unfortunately, the European population size of many species during the non-breeding season is not well known, though data are available for waterbirds. Non-breeding waterbirds are considered to occur in internationally important numbers if 20% or more of the northwest European or East Atlantic Flyway population occurs in the UK. We calculated non-breeding waterbird population sizes for the UK from two sources of data. Recently revised estimates have been produced for wildfowl in Britain (Kershaw & Cranswick in prep.) and waders in the UK (Rehfishch *et al.* in prep). For wildfowl in Northern Ireland, population estimates were based on WeBS data and calculated as the mean annual maxima over the five-year period from 1994/95 to 1998/99. An approximation of the UK non-breeding population was then calculated by summing the British and Northern Ireland population estimates. Population sizes of non-breeding waterbirds for northwest Europe and the East Atlantic Flyway were also taken from Rose & Scott (1997). It should, however, be noted that many of the original data in that source, and especially those for waders, come from the early to mid 1980s (e.g. Smit & Piersma 1989). Where population estimates were given as ranges, the maximum value was used. For eight species, the estimates are given as 'greater than one million', in which case one million was used in the assessment. In no case do the UK estimates come close to the threshold figure of 20%, however, and of course if the European estimates were larger, the UK percentage would be even smaller. Hence, this approach is conservative.

Results

We have assessed the population status of 247 species. Forty species (c. 16%) were placed on the Red list and 121 species (c. 49%) on the Amber list. The species that qualified as Red or Amber listed, and the criteria under which they qualify, are given in tables 1 & 2. The remaining 86 species (c. 35%) were Green listed by default, although in a number of cases this probably reflects a lack of data rather than population status (table 3). This is a particular issue for species occurring on passage in the UK. A small number of previously regular breeding species have become extinct as breeding birds in the UK since 1800 (table 4).

Nine new species have been added to the original BoCC Red list because of declines in breeding populations (table 5). Of these, six have moved from Amber to Red (Ring Ouzel, Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*, Savi's Warbler *L. luscinioides*, Marsh Tit *Parus palustris*, Willow Tit *P. montanus* and Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*), and three species (Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, and Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*) have moved straight from Green to Red. Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Grasshopper Warbler qualify because this review has adopted the precautionary approach, so that species qualify when the data are considered representative, even when the trends are based on small sample sizes. This was not the case in the original review, where trends based on low numbers of CBC plots were excluded (Gibbons *et al.* 1996a). Despite this, the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker's trend would not have qualified it for Red or Amber listing at that time. Ring Ouzel qualifies because its population, when corrected for differences in survey effort between the 1988-91 *New Atlas* and the 1999 national survey, shows a decline of more than 50% over ten years. The population of Savi's Warblers, although small, has undergone a marked decline over the last 25 years (table 7). Note that some of the species added to the Red list still have populations in excess of 10,000 pairs/territories in the UK. While still relatively common, the status of such species, showing considerable recent declines, is of general concern.

Five species originally listed under the historical decline category have moved from the

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Table 1. The population status of birds in the UK: 'Red-listed' species.

Species	Scientific name	Red-listing criteria						Additional Amber-listing criteria under which species qualifies									
		IUCN	HD	BD	BD	BD	WD	HD	BDM	BDM	BDM	WDM	SPEC	BR	BL	WL	BI
			P	P	P	P		P	r	r	p	2 & 3	BR	BL	WL	BI	WI
Great Bittern ¹	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>		*	*	*	*						3	*		*		
Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>					*							*				
White-tailed Eagle ¹	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>		*	*	*	*						3	*				
Hen Harrier ¹	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>		*	*	*	*						3	*				
Black Grouse	<i>Tetrao tetrix</i>		*	*	*	*						3	*				
Capercaillie ¹	<i>Tetrao urogallus</i>		*	*	*	*						3	*				
Grey Partridge ²	<i>Pendix perdix</i>		*	*	*	*						3	*				
Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>		*	*	*	*						3	*				
Corn Crake ¹	<i>Crex crex</i>	A	*	*	*	*						3	*				
Stone-curlew ¹	<i>Burhinus oedipnemus</i>		*	*	*	*						3	*				
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>		*	*	*	*						2	*				*
Red-necked Phalarope ¹	<i>Plalaropus lobatus</i>		*	*	*	*						2	*				*
Roseate Tern ¹	<i>Sterna dougallii</i>		*	*	*	*						3	*				
Turtle Dove ²	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>		*	*	*	*						3	*				
European Nighthjar ¹	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>		*	*	*	*						2	*				
Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>		*	*	*	*						3	*				
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>		*	*	*	*						2	*				
Wood Lark ¹	<i>Lullula arborum</i>		*	*	*	*						2	*				
Sky Lark ²	<i>Aldaia arvensis</i>		*	*	*	*						3	*				
Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>		*	*	*	*							*				
Song Thrush ²	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		*	*	*	*							*				
Grasshopper Warbler ²	<i>Locustella naevia</i>		*	*	*	*							*				
Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>		*	*	*	*							*				
Aquatic Warbler ¹	<i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i>	B	*	*	*	*							*				
Marsh Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>		*	*	*	*							*				
Spotted Flycatcher ²	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>		*	*	*	*						3	*				
Marsh Tit ²	<i>Parus palustris</i>		*	*	*	*							*				
Willow Tit ²	<i>Parus montanus</i>		*	*	*	*							*				
Red-backed Shrike ¹	<i>Lanius collurio</i>		*	*	*	*							*				
Common Starling ²	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		*	*	*	*							*				
House Sparrow ²	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		*	*	*	*							*				
Tree Sparrow ²	<i>Passer montanus</i>		*	*	*	*							*				
Linnet ²	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>		*	*	*	*							*				

Twite	<i>Carduelis flavirostris</i>	C	*
Scottish Crossbill ¹	<i>Loxia scotica</i>		*
Bullfinch ²	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>		*
Yellowhammer ²	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>		*
Girl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirilis</i>		*
Reed Bunting ²	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>		*
Corn Bunting ²	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>		*

KEY * The species qualifies for Red or Amber listing under a particular criterion.
 1 Annex I of the EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds.
 2 Estimated population size of >10,000 pairs or territories in the UK.

Qualifying criteria for:

Red listing
IUCN
 Globally Threatened.
HD
 Historical population decline during 1800-1995.
BDp
 Rapid (≥ 50%) decline in UK breeding population over previous 25 years.
BDr
 Rapid (≥ 50%) contraction of UK breeding range over previous 25 years.
WDp
 Rapid (≥ 50%) decline in UK non-breeding population over previous 25 years.

Amber listing
HDrec
 Historical population decline during 1800-1995, but recovering; population size has more than doubled over previous 25 years.
BDMp
 Moderate (25-49%) decline in UK breeding population over previous 25 years.
BDMr
 Moderate (25-49%) contraction of UK breeding range over 25 years.
WDMp
 Moderate (25-49%) decline in UK non-breeding population over previous 25 years.
SPECS 2 & 3
 Species with unfavourable conservation status, concentrated in Europe (2) or not (3). w = wintering population only.
BR
 Five-year mean population size of 1-300 breeding pairs in UK.
BL
 ≥ 50% of UK breeding population in ten or fewer sites, but not rare breeders (BR).
WL
 ≥ 50% of UK non-breeding population in ten or fewer sites; p = passage population.
BI
 ≥ 20% of European breeding population in UK.
WI
 ≥ 20% of NW European (wildfowl), East Atlantic Flyway (waders), or European (others) non-breeding populations in UK.

IUCN Globally Threatened species assessment (BirdLife International 2000):
A Vulnerable A2c (= Decline > 20% in 10 years or three generations; decline likely in near future (projected or suspected) based on: decline in extent of occurrence, area of occupancy and/or quality of habitat).
B Vulnerable A1c, A2c (= Decline > 20% in 10 years or three generations; decline which has happened (observed, estimated, inferred or suspected), and decline likely in near future (projected or suspected) based on: decline in extent of occurrence, area of occupancy and/or quality of habitat).
C Vulnerable B1, B3a, B3c (Extent of occurrence < 20,000km², severe fragmentation; extreme fluctuations in extent of occurrence and number of locations [R. Summers pers comm.]).

Table 2. The population status of birds in the UK: 'Amber-listed' species.

Species	Scientific name	Qualifying criteria for Amber listing										
		HD rec	BDM p	BDM r	WDM p	SPEC 2&3	BR	BL	WL	BI	WI	
Red-throated Diver ¹	<i>Gavia stellata</i>		*			3						
Black-throated Diver ¹	<i>Gavia arctica</i>					3	*					
Great Northern Diver ¹	<i>Gavia immer</i>											*
Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>						*		*			
Slavonian Grebe ¹	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>		*				*					
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>						*					
Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>							*				
Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>					2		*		*		
European Storm-petrel ¹	<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>					2		*			*	
Leach's Storm-petrel ¹	<i>Oceanodroma leucorhoa</i>					3		*		*		
Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>					2		*		*		
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>							*				*
Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>							*			*	
Little Egret ¹	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>						*					
Eurasian Spoonbill ¹	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>					2	*					
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>										*	
Tundra Swan ¹	<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>					3w			*			*
Whooper Swan ¹	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>						*		*			*
Bean Goose	<i>Anser fabalis</i>								*			
Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>								*			*
White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>				a				*			b
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>							*	*			*
Barnacle Goose ¹	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>					2w			*			*
Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>					3w			*			*
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>								*			*
Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>								*			*
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>					3		*				*
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>											*
Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>					3	*		*			*
Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>					3	*					*
Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>											*
Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>											*
Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>					3w	*		*			
Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>								*			
Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>								*			
Velvet Scoter	<i>Melanitta fusca</i>					3w			*			
Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>						*		*			
European Honey-buzzard ¹	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>						*					
Red Kite ¹	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	*										
Marsh Harrier ¹	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	*						*				
Montagu's Harrier ¹	<i>Circus pygargus</i>			*				*				
Golden Eagle ¹	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>					3						
Osprey ¹	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	*				3	*					
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		*			3						
Merlin ¹	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	*										
Peregrine Falcon ¹	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>					3						
Red Grouse	<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>		*									
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>			*								
Spotted Crane ¹	<i>Porzana porzana</i>						*					
Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>					3	*					
Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>								*	*		*
Avocet ¹	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>					3w		*		*p		
Great Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>				*							*
Dotterel ¹	<i>Charadrius morinellus</i>							*				
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>									*p		*
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>		*									*
Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>					3w			*			*
Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>						*					*
Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>						*					*
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>				*	3w		*	*			*
Ruff ¹	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>						*		*			
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		*c									
Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>		*c	*		3w						
Bar-tailed Godwit ¹	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>					3w				*p		*

Species	Scientific name	Qualifying criteria for Amber listing									
		HD rec	BDM p	BDM r	WDM p	SPEC 2&3	BR	BL	WL	BI	WI
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>							*	P		
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>					3w				*	*
Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>								*		
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>		*c			2					*
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>						*				
Wood Sandpiper ¹	<i>Tringa glareola</i>					3	*				
Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>										*
Great Skua	<i>Catharacta skua</i>							*		*	
Mediterranean Gull ¹	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>						*				
Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>		*					*			
Common Gull	<i>Larus cauus</i>		*			2		*			
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>							*		*	
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>		*d					*			
Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>							*			
Sandwich Tern ¹	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>					2		*			
Arctic Tern ¹	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>		*								
Little Tern ¹	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>		*			3		*			
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>									*	
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>							*		*	
Black Guillemot	<i>Cephus grylle</i>					2					
Atlantic Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>					2		*			
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>									*	
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>		*								
Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>			*		3					
Short-eared Owl ¹	<i>Asio flammeus</i>					3					
Common Kingfisher ¹	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>					3					
Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>					2					
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>					3					
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>					3					
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>		*								
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>		*c								
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		*								
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>		*								
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>		*								
Hedge Accentor	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		*								
Rufous Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>			*							
Bluethroat ¹	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>						*				
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>						*				
Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>					2					
Common Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>					3					
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>		*				*				
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>						*				
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		*								
Dartford Warbler ¹	<i>Sylvia undata</i>	*				2		*			
Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>		*								
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>		*								
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>		*c								
Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>						*				
Bearded Tit	<i>Parus biarmicus</i>							*			
Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>						*				
Red-billed Chough ¹	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>					3		*			
European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>						*				
Lesser Redpoll	<i>Carduelis cabaret</i>		*c							*	
Parrot Crossbill	<i>Loxia pytyopsittacus</i>						*				
Common Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>						*				
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>			*							
Snow Bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>						*				

1 Annex I of the EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds.

a Subspecies only: European White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons albifrons*.

b Subspecies only: Greenland White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons flavirostris*.

c The species is Amber listed, even though its apparent population decline was more than 50%, because the trend is considered to be possibly unrepresentative of the whole of the UK due to geographic or habitat-related sampling bias towards populations with low densities.

d The species is Amber listed, even though its apparent population decline was more than 50%, because the data from Seabird 2000 remain provisional.

p The species qualifies as a localised non-breeder for its population occurring on passage.

Table 3. The population status of birds in the UK: 'Green-listed' species.

Species	Scientific name	Assessed for BoCCH	SPEC
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Insufficient data	
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	✓	
Great Shearwater	<i>Puffinus gravis</i>	Insufficient data	
Sooty Shearwater	<i>Puffinus griseus</i>	Insufficient data	
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	
Snow Goose	<i>Anser caerulescens</i>	Insufficient data	
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	✓	
Smew ¹	<i>Mergellus albellus</i>	✓	3
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	✓	
Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	✓	
Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	✓	
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	✓	
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	
Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	✓	
Ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus mutus</i>	✓	
Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓	
Common Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	✓	
European Golden Plover ¹	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	✓	4
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	✓	
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	✓	
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	✓	
Jack Snipe	<i>Lymnocyptes minimus</i>	✓	3
Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	✓	
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	✓	
Pomarine Skua	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>	Insufficient data	
Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	✓	
Long-tailed Skua	<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>	Insufficient data	
Little Gull	<i>Larus minutus</i>	✓	3
Iceland Gull	<i>Larus glaucoideus</i>	Insufficient data	
Glaucous Gull	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>	Insufficient data	
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	✓	4
Common Tern ¹	<i>Sterna hirsudo</i>	✓	
Black Tern ¹	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	✓	3
Little Auk	<i>Alca alle</i>	Insufficient data	
Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Insufficient data/✓	
Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	4
Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	✓	4
Long-eared Owl	<i>Asio otus</i>	✓	
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	✓	
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	✓	
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	✓	
Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>	✓	
Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>	✓	
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	
Bohemian Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>	✓	
Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	✓	
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓	
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	4
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	✓	4
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	✓	
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	4
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	✓	
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	✓	4
Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	✓	4
Icterine Warbler	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>	✓	4
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	✓	
Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	✓	4
Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	✓	4

Species	Scientific name	Assessed for BoCCII	SPEC
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	✓	4
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓	
Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	✓	4
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	✓	
Crested Tit	<i>Parus cristatus</i>	✓	4
Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	✓	
Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	✓	4
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	
European Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	✓	
Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	✓	
Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>	✓	4
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	✓	
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	
Eurasian Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	✓	4
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	✓	
Carriion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	
Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓	
Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	4
Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	✓	
Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	✓	4
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	
Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>	✓	4
Common Redpoll	<i>Carduelis flammea</i>	Insufficient data	
Common Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	✓	
Lapland Longspur	<i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>	✓	

SPEC4 = Species of European Conservation Concern which are concentrated in Europe and of favourable conservation status (Tucker & Heath 1994).

1 Annex I of the EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds.

Table 4. Regular breeding species which have become extinct in the UK since 1800. Extinct species are defined as formerly regular breeding birds which have not bred in the UK within the last 20 years.

Species	Scientific name	Scale of extinction	Date last recorded breeding in UK	SPEC category
Great Bustard	<i>Otis tarda</i>	Regional	c. 1830s	1
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	Regional	c. 1970s	3
Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	Regional	c. 1970s	3
Great Auk	<i>Pinguinus impennis</i>	Global	c. 1800s	–



263. Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*. A species of raptor which has responded well to targeted conservation action, and has moved from the Red to the Amber list.

Table 5. Changes in species composition between BoCC 2002-2007 and the original BoCC list.

Species	Change in listing	Reason for change in listing
New to Red list		
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	G → R	≥ 50% decline in breeding population
Ring Ouzel	A → R	≥ 50% decline in breeding population
Grasshopper Warbler	A → R	≥ 50% decline in breeding population
Savi's Warbler	A → R	≥ 50% decline in breeding population
Marsh Tit	A → R	≥ 50% decline in breeding population
Willow Tit	A → R	≥ 50% decline in breeding population
Common Starling	A → R	≥ 50% decline in breeding population
House Sparrow	G → R	≥ 50% decline in breeding population
Yellowhammer	G → R	≥ 50% decline in breeding population
New to Amber list		
Fulmar	G → A	Localised during the breeding season
Great Cormorant	G → A	Localised during the breeding season; internationally important during the non-breeding season
Little Egret	G → A	Rare breeder
Eurasian Spoonbill	G → A	Rare breeder
Mute Swan	G → A	Internationally important during the breeding season
Red Grouse	G → A	≥ 25% decline in breeding population
Long-tailed Duck	G → A	Localised during the non-breeding season
Spotted Redshank	G → A	Localised during the non-breeding season
Green Sandpiper	G → A	Rare breeder
Black-headed Gull	G → A	≥ 25% decline in breeding population
Kittiwake	G → A	Localised during the breeding season
Common Cuckoo	G → A	≥ 25% decline in breeding population
House Martin	G → A	≥ 25% decline in breeding population
Tree Pipit	G → A	≥ 25% decline in breeding population
Meadow Pipit	G → A	≥ 25% decline in breeding population
Yellow Wagtail	G → A	≥ 25% decline in breeding population
Grey Wagtail	G → A	≥ 25% decline in breeding population
Bluethroat	G → A	Rare breeder
Mistle Thrush	G → A	≥ 25% decline in breeding population
Wood Warbler	G → A	≥ 25% decline in breeding population
Willow Warbler	G → A	≥ 25% decline in breeding population
Goldcrest	G → A	≥ 25% decline in breeding population
Lesser Redpoll	G → A	≥ 25% decline in breeding population
From Red to Amber list		
Red Kite	R → A	≥ 100% increase in breeding population over previous 25 years
Marsh Harrier	R → A	≥ 100% increase in breeding population over previous 25 years
Osprey	R → A	≥ 100% increase in breeding population over previous 25 years
Merlin	R → A	≥ 100% increase in breeding population over previous 25 years
Dartford Warbler	R → A	≥ 100% increase in breeding population over previous 25 years
From Amber to Green list		
European Golden Plover	A → G	New data suggest that it does not qualify as internationally important during the non-breeding season
Jack Snipe	A → G	SPEC3 but only occurs as a non-breeding species
Greenshank	A → G	New data suggest it does not qualify as a localised breeder
Little Gull	A → G	No longer a rare breeder (< 1 pair)
Blackbird	A → G	Population decline < 25% over previous 25 years
Cetti's Warbler	A → G	No longer a rare breeder (> 300 pairs)
Icterine Warbler	A → G	No longer a rare breeder (< 1 pair)
Crested Tit	A → G	New data suggest it does not qualify as a localised breeder
Brambling	A → G	No longer a rare breeder (< 1 pair)
Goldfinch	A → G	Population decline < 25% over previous 25 years
Removed from Amber list		
Black-winged Stilt	A → Off	No longer a rare breeder (< 1 pair), and excluded because its status as a RBBP species is based on a single summering individual

The lists are abbreviated to: A = Amber; G = Green; R = Red. For original BoCC list, see Gibbons *et al.* 1996a; JNCC 1996.

Table 6. Changes in the criteria under which Red- and Amber-listed species qualify; new declining species.

Species	Overall listing	Magnitude and season of population decline
Red-throated Diver	Amber	≥ 25% decline in breeding population
Slavonian Grebe	Amber	≥ 25% decline in breeding population
Capercaillie	Red	≥ 50% decline in breeding population
Great Ringed Plover	Amber	≥ 25% decline in non-breeding population
Northern Lapwing	Amber	≥ 25% decline in breeding population
Dunlin	Amber	≥ 25% decline in non-breeding population
Common Snipe ¹	Amber	≥ 25% decline in breeding population
Woodcock ¹	Amber	≥ 25% decline in breeding population
Black-tailed Godwit	Amber	≥ 25% decline in breeding population
Common Redshank ¹	Amber	≥ 25% decline in breeding population
Common Gull	Amber	≥ 25% decline in breeding population
Little Tern	Amber	≥ 25% decline in breeding population
Fieldfare	Amber	≥ 25% decline in breeding population

1. The species is Amber listed, even though its apparent population decline was more than 50%, because the trend is considered to be possibly unrepresentative of the whole of the UK due to geographic or habitat-related sampling bias towards populations with low densities.



264. Red Kite *Milvus milvus*. A good example of a conservation success story; Red Kite was formerly Red listed, but is now classified as an Amber-list species.

Roger Wilmshurst

Table 7. Population trends of species on the Red and Amber lists.

Species	Season	Data source	Region	Period (t ₁ - t ₂) years	No. years	Population t ₁	Population t ₂	% Change	Caveats	Listing on this criterion
Red-throated Diver	B	Single-species survey ¹	Shetland	1983 - 1994	11	607	390	-36		Amber
Slavonian Grebe	B	Single-species survey ²	UK	1972/76 - 1997/01	25	61.6	40	-35		Amber
Great Bittern	B	RBBP & Survey ²	UK	1973/77 - 1997/01	24	50.6	19	-62		Red
Common Scoter	B	RBBP & Survey ³	UK	1973/77 - 1995	20	149.8	95	-37		Amber
Red Kite	B	RBBP & Survey ⁴	UK	1973/77 - 2000	25	32	430	+1244		Amber ^a
Marsh Harrier	B	RBBP	UK	1973/77 - 1995/99	22	8.6	141.4	+1544		Amber ^a
Osprey	B	RBBP	UK	1973/77 - 1995/99	22	15.6	118.2	+658		Amber ^a
Common Kestrel	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-28		Amber
Merlin	B	Single-species survey ⁵	UK	1983/84 - 1993/94	10	600	1300	+117		Amber ^a
Red Grouse	B	Single-species survey ⁶	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-25 to -49		Amber
Black Grouse	B	Single-species survey ⁷	UK	1991/92 - 1995/96	4	25000	6510	-74		Red
Capercaillie	B	Single-species survey ⁸	UK	1992/94 - 1998/99	5	2200	1073	-51		Red
Grey Partridge	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-84		Red
Great Ringed Plover	NB	WeBS	UK	1974/75 - 1999/00	25			-28		Amber
Northern Lapwing	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-41	U-H, U-LD	Amber
Northern Lapwing	B	BBS	UK	1994 - 2000	6			-13		Amber
Dunlin	NB	WeBS	UK	1974/75 - 1999/00	25			-36		Amber
Common Snipe	B	CBC	UK	1974-1999	25			-67	SS-L, U-H	Amber ^b
Woodcock	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-76	SS-L, U-H	Amber ^b
Black-tailed Godwit	B	RBBP	UK	1973/77 - 1995/99	22	69.4	45.2	-35		Amber
Common Redshank	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-63	SS-L, U-H	Amber ^b
Common Redshank	B	WBS	UK	1975 - 1999	24			-44	SS, U-H	Amber
Common Redshank	B	Single-species survey ⁹	Britain (saltmarsh)	1985 - 1996	11	21022	16433	-23		Amber
Black-headed Gull	B	Seabird trends ¹⁰	UK	1985/88 - 1998/01	15	206249	124199	-40		Amber
Common Gull	B	Seabird trends ¹⁰	UK	1985/88 - 1998/01	15	67992	42945	-37		Amber
Herring Gull	B	Seabird trends ¹⁰	UK	1969/70 - 1998/01	30	297856	116377	-61		Amber ^a
Roseate Tern	B	Seabird trends ¹⁰	UK	1975 - 2000	25	601	53	-91		Red
Arctic Tern	B	Seabird trends ¹⁰	UK	1985 - 2000	15	80200	44555	-45		Amber
Little Tern	B	Seabird trends ¹⁰	UK	1975 - 2000	25	2644	1902	-28		Amber
Turtle Dove	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-69	SS-L	Red
Common Cuckoo	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-31		Amber

Species	Season	Data source	Region	Period (t ₁ - t ₂)	No. years	Population t ₁	Population t ₂	% Change	Caveats	Listing on this criterion
Wryneck	B	RBBP	UK	1973/77 - 1995/99	22	9	3.2	-64		Red
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-73	SS-L	Red
Sky Lark	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-55		Red
House Martin	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-33	SS	Amber
Tree Pipit	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-75	U-H, U-LD	Amber ^b
Meadow Pipit	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-43	U-H, U-LD	Amber ^b
Yellow Wagtail	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-36	SS-L	Amber
Grey Wagtail	B	WBS	UK	1975 - 1999	24			-41		Amber
Hedge Accentor	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-43		Amber
Ring Ouzel	B	Atlas & Survey ¹¹	UK	1988/91 - 1999	10			-58		Red ^d
Fieldfare	B	RBBP	UK	1973/77 - 1995/99	22	7.6	4	-47		Amber
Song Thrush	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-53		Red
Mistle Thrush	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-38		Amber
Grasshopper Warbler	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-79	SS	Red
Savi's Warbler	B	RBBP	UK	1973/77 - 1995/99	22	11.8	4.4	-63		Red
Marsh Warbler	B	RBBP	UK	1973/77 - 1995/99	22	75	27.6	-63		Red
Dartford Warbler	B	Single-species survey ¹²	UK	1974 - 1994	20	560	1670	+198		Amber ^a
Wood Warbler	B	BBS	UK	1994 - 2000	6			-43		Amber
Willow Warbler	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-31	U-H	Amber
Goldcrest	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-55		Amber ^b
Spotted Flycatcher	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-75		Red
Marsh Tit	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-50		Red
Willow Tit	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-80	SS-L	Red
Red-backed Shrike	B	RBBP	UK	1973/77 - 1995/99	22	49	4.8	-90		Red
Common Starling	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-66		Red
House Sparrow	B	CBC ¹³	UK	1977 - 1999	22			-62		Red
Tree Sparrow	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-95	SS-L	Red
Linnets	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-55		Red
Lesser Redpoll	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-96	SS, U-H, U-LD	Amber ^b
Bullfinch	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-57		Red
Yellowhammer	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-54		Red
Reed Bunting	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-62		Red
Corn Bunting	B	CBC	UK	1974 - 1999	25			-89	SS-L	Red

Table 7 cont'd. Population trends of species on the Red and Amber lists – KEY.

Species with a population decline $\geq 50\%$ are Red listed, and those with a decline 25.0-49.9% are Amber listed. Seasons are abbreviated to: B = Breeding; NB = Non-breeding. Data sources are abbreviated as follows: BBS = Breeding Bird Survey; CBC = Common Birds Census; RBBP = Rare Breeding Birds Panel; WBS = Waterways Birds Survey; WeBS = Wetland Bird Survey. Population sizes based on RBBP data are five-year means of the maximum total number of pairs (or more relevant unit). The data caveats indicating the reliability of the trends are described in more detail in the text, and are abbreviated in the table as: SS(-E/L) = Small sample size (in early or later years of the time period); U-H/LD = Unrepresentative of the whole of the UK due to habitat- or geographical-related sampling bias towards populations with low densities (Atlas correction ratio ≥ 1).

- a Species is Amber listed, even though it has undergone a historical population decline during 1800-1995, because its population size has more than doubled over the previous 25 years.
- b The species is Amber listed, even though its apparent population decline was more than 50%, because this trend is considered to be possibly unrepresentative of the whole of the UK due to geographical- or habitat-related sampling bias towards populations with low densities. See text for details.
- c The species is Amber listed, even though its apparent population decline was more than 50%, because the data from Seabird 2000 remain provisional.
- d Population change incorporates correction for differences in survey effort (Sim, Gregory & Wotton, unpublished data).

- 1 Gomersall *et al.* (1984); Gibbons *et al.* (1997).
- 2 RSPB unpublished monitoring data.
- 3 Underhill *et al.* (1998).
- 4 Wotton *et al.* (in press).
- 5 Bibby & Nattrass (1986); Rebecca & Bainbridge (1998).
- 6 N. J. Aebischer *in litt.*
- 7 Baines & Hudson (1995); Hancock *et al.* (1999).
- 8 Catt *et al.* (1998); Wilkinson *et al.* (2002).
- 9 Brindley *et al.* (1998).
- 10 Seabird 2000 (Mitchell *et al.* in prep).
- 11 Wotton *et al.* (2002).
- 12 Bibby & Tubbs (1975); Gibbons & Wotton (1996).
- 13 The House Sparrow was not reliably recorded on CBC plots before 1976; thus trends are based on the 22-year period 1977-1999.



265. Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*. One of a number of farmland birds that remains on the Red list, with its breeding population continuing to decline.

Table 8. Changes in geographical breeding range of species on the Red and Amber lists.

Species	Data source	Region	Period (t ₁ – t ₂)	No. years	No. 10-km sq t ₁	No. 10-km sq t ₂	% Change	Listing on this criterion
Great Bittern	Atlas & Survey ¹	UK	1968/72 – 2000	30	35	15	-57	Red
Common Scoter	Atlas & Survey ²	UK	1968/72 – 1995	25	48	23	-52	Red
Montagu's Harrier	Atlases	UK	1968/72 – 1988/91	20	50	32	-36	Amber
Black Grouse	Atlases	UK	1968/72 – 1988/91	20	603	432	-28	Amber
Capercaillie	Atlases	UK	1968/72 – 1988/91	20	182	62	-64	Red
Water Rail	Atlases	UK	1968/72 – 1988/91	20	707	475	-33	Amber
Corn Crane ^a	Atlas & Survey ³	Britain	1968/72 – 1998	28	450	93	-79	Red
Stone-curlew	Atlas & Survey ¹	UK	1968/72 – 1996/00	28	93	41	-56	Red
Woodcock	Atlases	UK	1968/72 – 1988/91	20	1814	1259	-31	Amber
Roseate Tern ^a	Atlas & Survey ¹	UK	1968/72 – 2000	30	31	8	-74	Red
Barn Owl	Atlases	UK	1968/72 – 1988/91	20	1884	1151	-39	Amber
European Nightjar	Atlas & Survey ¹	Britain	1968/72 – 1992	22	562	268	-52	Red
Wryneck	Atlases	UK	1968/72 – 1988/91	20	48	6	-87	Red
Wood Lark	Atlas & Survey ³	UK	1968/72 – 1997	27	196	90	-54	Red
Rufous Nightingale	Atlas & Survey ^a	UK	1968/72 – 1999	29	639	348	-45	Amber
Ring Ouzel	Atlases	UK	1968/72 – 1988/91	20	752	459	-27	Amber
Grasshopper Warbler	Atlases	UK	1968/72 – 1988/91	20	2018	1273	-37	Amber
Marsh Warbler	Atlases	UK	1968/72 – 1988/91	20	21	15	-29	Amber
Red-backed Shrike	Atlases	UK	1968/72 – 1988/91	20	111	15	-86	Red
Hawfinch	Atlases	UK	1968/72 – 1988/91	20	459	315	-31	Amber
Chil Bunting	Atlas & Survey ⁷	UK	1968/72 – 1998	28	174	21	-88	Red
Corn Bunting	Atlases	UK	1968/72 – 1988/91	20	1369	922	-33	Amber

Species with a range contraction $\geq 50\%$ are Red listed, and those with a range contraction 25.0-49.9% are Amber listed. Data sources are abbreviated as follows: Atlases = 1968-72 *Breeding Atlas* (Sharrock 1976) and 1988-91 *New Atlas* (Gibbons *et al.* 1993); Survey = Single-species survey or data gathered as part of an annual monitoring programme.

a Range change based only on the number of occupied 10-km squares with breeding evidence. See text for details.

1 RSPB unpublished monitoring data.

2 Underhill *et al.* (1998).

3 Green & Gibbons (2000).

4 Morris *et al.* (1994).

5 Wotton & Gillings (2000).

6 Wilson *et al.* (in press).

7 Wotton *et al.* (2000).

Table 9. Population estimates for rare breeding species.

Species	Data source	Unit	Population size
Black-throated Diver	Survey (1994) ¹	Pairs	155-189
Red-necked Grebe	RBBP	Max total pairs	2.6
Slavonian Grebe	Survey (1997-2001) ¹	Breeding pairs	40
Black-necked Grebe	RBBP	Max total pairs	55.4
Great Bittern	Survey (1997-2001) ¹	Booming males	19
Little Egret	RBBP	Max total pairs	16.2
Eurasian Spoonbill	RBBP	Max total pairs	3.2
Whooper Swan	RBBP	Max total wild pairs	6.6
Pintail	RBBP	Max total pairs	43.6
Garganey	RBBP	Max total pairs	115.2
Greater Scaup	RBBP	Max total pairs	1.4
Common Scoter	Survey (1995) ²	Pairs	95
Common Goldeneye	RBBP	Max total pairs	87.8 ^a
European Honey-buzzard	Survey (2000) ³	Max total pairs	61
White-tailed Eagle	Survey (1997-2001) ¹	Territorial pairs	19.6
Marsh Harrier	RBBP	Max breeding females	141.4
Montagu's Harrier	RBBP	Max total pairs	10.6
Osprey	RBBP	Max total pairs	118.2
Spotted Crake	Survey (1999) ⁴	Singing males	73
Common Crane	RBBP	Pairs	3.8
Stone-curlew	Survey (2000) ¹	Pairs	254
Temminck's Stint	RBBP	Max total pairs	2.8
Purple Sandpiper	RBBP	Max total pairs	2
Ruff	RBBP	No. leks	3.2
Green Sandpiper	RBBP	Max total pairs	1.4
Black-tailed Godwit	RBBP	Max total pairs	45.2
Wood Sandpiper	RBBP	Max total pairs	8.8
Red-necked Phalarope	Survey (1997-2001) ¹	Males	22.8
Mediterranean Gull	Seabird (1999-2001)	Max total pairs	89
Roseate Tern	Seabird (2001)	Breeding pairs	58
Wryneck	RBBP	Max total pairs	3.2
Bluethroat	RBBP	Max total pairs	1.4
Black Redstart	RBBP	Max total pairs	77.4
Fieldfare	RBBP	Max total pairs	4
Redwing	RBBP	Max total pairs	23.2
Savi's Warbler	RBBP	Max total pairs	4.4
Marsh Warbler	RBBP	Max total pairs	27.6
Firecrest	RBBP	Max total pairs	65.8
Golden Oriole	RBBP	Max total pairs	25.4
Red-backed Shrike	RBBP	Max total pairs	4.8
European Serin	RBBP	Max total pairs (UK)	1.8
Parrot Crossbill	RBBP	Max total pairs	1.8 ^b
Common Rosefinch	RBBP	Max total pairs	7.2
Snow Bunting	RBBP	Max total pairs	25.4

Data sources are abbreviated to: RBBP = Rare Breeding Birds Panel; Survey = Single-species survey or data gathered as part of an annual monitoring programme; Seabird = Seabird 2000. The year(s) of the survey is given in parentheses. Population sizes derived from RBBP data are means for the five-year period 1995-99.

a National population figures are no longer collected because only sample data are available from nestbox schemes in Highland Region, Scotland.

b National population status is uncertain.

1 RSPB unpublished monitoring data.

2 Underhill *et al.* (1998).

3 Batten (2001).

4 Gilbert (2002).



P Newman

266. Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, a Red-list species still in trouble



Bob Glover

267. The Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix* is another farmland species which, with a decreasing breeding population, remains Red listed.

Table 10. Localised species during the breeding or non-breeding season.

Species	Season	UK population ^{1,2,3}	Population on top ten IBAs or SPAs	Percentage of UK population
Red-necked Grebe	NB	200	126	63.0
Fulmar	B	474000 ⁴	274200	57.9
Manx Shearwater	B	250000	226350	90.5
European Storm-petrel	B	25500 ⁴	35160	100.0
Leach's Storm-petrel	B	49000 ⁴	55000	100.0
Northern Gannet	B	201000	205870	100.0
Great Cormorant	B	7700 ⁴	3900	50.7
Shag	B	26000 ⁴	13295	51.1
Great Bittern	NB	100	50	50.0
Tundra Swan	NB	8240	8650	100.0
Whooper Swan	NB	9380	6060	64.6
Bean Goose	NB	400	212	53.0
Pink-footed Goose	NB	241010	254500	100.0
White-fronted Goose	NB	26840	15265	56.9
Greylag Goose	B	700	425	70.8
Greylag Goose	NB	92610	83450	90.1
Barnacle Goose	NB	67000	47852	71.4
Brent Goose	NB	118740	117590	99.0
Common Shelduck	NB	81890	60360	73.7
Eurasian Wigeon	NB	416740	210400	50.5
Gadwall	B	790	443	56.1
Pintail	NB	28180	24140	85.7
Greater Scaup	NB	12210	9010	73.8
Common Eider	NB	74020	43980	59.4
Long-tailed Duck	NB	16020	8890	55.5
Common Scoter	NB	50150	73150	100.0
Velvet Scoter	NB	3000	2240	74.7
Common Goldeneye	NB	33220	18155	54.6
Corn Crake	B	648 ⁵	444	68.5
Oystercatcher	NB	334600	217600	65.0
Avocet	B	492	517	100.0
Avocet	NB	3395	2755	81.1
Avocet	NB (P)	1760	1735	98.6
Dotterel	B	630 ⁶	469	74.4
Grey Plover	NB	53250	45050	84.6
Grey Plover	NB (P)	70000	43670	62.4
Red Knot	NB	294900	353800	100.0
Dunlin	B	9900	6812	68.8
Dunlin	NB	576400	399100	69.2
Ruff	NB	1255	731	58.2
Black-tailed Godwit	NB	15830	13815	87.3
Black-tailed Godwit	NB (P)	12400	14080	100.0
Bar-tailed Godwit	NB	65430	53260	81.4
Whimbrel	B	530	336	63.4
Whimbrel	NB (P)	3600	4146	100.0
Spotted Redshank	NB	159	83	52.2
Great Skua	B	8500	6875	80.9
Black-headed Gull	B	124000 ⁴	62010	50.0
Common Gull	B	43000 ⁴	34165	79.5
Lesser Black-backed Gull	B	99000 ⁴	88633	89.5
Herring Gull	B	116000 ⁴	62820	54.2
Kittiwake	B	360000 ⁴	324300	90.1
Sandwich Tern	B	12000 ⁴	10485	85.9
Little Tern	B	1900 ⁴	1219	64.2
Razorbill	B	120000 ⁴	70140	58.5
Atlantic Puffin	B	451500	398600	88.3
European Nightjar	B	3400	2021	59.4

Wood Lark	B	1552 ⁷	1102	71.0
Aquatic Warbler	NB (P)	67	47	70.1
Dartford Warbler	B	1890	1691	89.5
Bearded Tit	B	408	363	89.0
Red-billed Chough	B	342	180	52.6

A site is defined as either an Important Bird Area (IBA), or a Special Protection Area (SPA). Seasons are abbreviated to: B = Breeding and NB = Non-breeding; P = Passage population only. For those species where the UK population estimates were given as ranges, the maximum figure only is presented here. Similarly, the percentage value is the percentage of the UK population maximum. For some species the population occurring on the ten best sites is greater than its UK population estimate because the UK population estimates and IBA or SPA count data originate from different years.

- 1 Breeding season: BirdLife International/EBCC (2000).
- 2 Non-breeding season: wildfowl, Kershaw & Cranswick (in prep.) plus WeBS five-year means for Northern Ireland; waders, Rehfisch *et al.* (in prep.).
- 3 Passage populations: Stone *et al.* (1997).
- 4 Seabird 2000 (Mitchell *et al.* in prep.)
- 5 RSPB unpublished monitoring data.
- 6 Whitfield (in press).
- 7 Wotton & Gillings (2000).



Chris Knights

268. The House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* is still a relatively widespread and common species, but is now on the Red list because of population declines. Along with Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor* and Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*, it has moved straight from the Green to the Red list.

Table 11. Species occurring in internationally important numbers during the breeding or non-breeding season.

Species	Season	European population ^{1,2}	UK population ^{1,3}	Percentage occurring in UK
Great Northern Diver	NB	5000	3020	60.4
Manx Shearwater	B	340000	250000	74.3
Leach's Storm-petrel	B	152000 ⁴	49000 ⁴	32.2
Northern Gannet	B	280000	201000	72.8
Great Cormorant	NB	120000	24900	20.8
Shag	B	80000 ⁴	26000 ⁴	33.1
Mute Swan	B	69000	15000	21.7
Tundra Swan	NB	17000	8240	48.5
Whooper Swan	NB	16000	9380	58.6
Pink-footed Goose	NB	225000	241010	100.0
Greylag Goose	NB	105250	92610	88.0
Barnacle Goose	NB	44000	67000	100.0
Brent Goose	NB	325000	138710	42.7
Common Shelduck	NB	300000	81890	27.3
Eurasian Wigeon	NB	1250000	416740	33.3
Gadwall	NB	30000	17350	57.8
Eurasian Teal	NB	400000	197080	49.3
Pintail	NB	60000	28180	47.0
Northern Shoveler	NB	40000	15020	37.6
Common Pochard	NB	350000	84350	24.1
Oystercatcher	B	380000	107000 ⁵	28.5
Oystercatcher	NB	874000	334600	38.3
Great Ringed Plover	NB	47500	32980	69.4
Grey Plover	NB	168000	53250	31.7
Northern Lapwing	NB	7000000	2079000	29.7
Red Knot	NB	345000	294900	85.5
Purple Sandpiper	NB	50500	17740	35.1
Dunlin	NB	1373000	576400	42.0
Black-tailed Godwit	NB	65000	15830	24.4
Bar-tailed Godwit	NB	115000	65430	56.9
Eurasian Curlew	B	330000	100000 ⁵	30.2
Eurasian Curlew	NB	348000	155700	44.7
Common Redshank	NB	177000	125500	70.9
Turnstone	NB	67000	51960	77.6
Great Skua	B	15000	8500	58.1
Lesser Black-backed Gull	B	270000 ⁴	99000 ⁴	37.3
Common Guillemot	B	2400000 ⁴	930000 ⁴	39.2
Razorbill	B	580000 ⁴	120000 ⁴	20.7
Stock Dove	B	650000	240000	36.7
Scottish Crossbill	B	1250	1250	100.0

Seasons are abbreviated to: B = Breeding; NB = Non-breeding. For those species where the European and/or UK population estimates were given as ranges, the maximum figure only is presented here. Similarly, the percentage value is the percentage of the European population maximum.

1 Estimates of European and UK breeding populations: BirdLife International/EBCC (2000)

2 Estimates of European non-breeding populations: Rose & Scott (1997) northwest European population (wildfowl and allies); Smit & Piersma (1989) East Atlantic Flyway population (waders).

3 Estimates of UK non-breeding populations: Kershaw & Cranswick (in prep.) plus WeBS 5-year means for Northern Ireland (wildfowl); Rehfish *et al.* (in prep.) (waders).

4 Updated by Seabird 2000 (Mitchell *et al.* in prep.).

5 O'Brien *in litt.*

Table 12. Population trends, localness and international importance of geese (species and subspecies/races/populations) occurring in the UK.

Species	Subspecies/race/population	Scientific name	Season	Population change (%) ¹	Percentage on top ten IBAs or SPAs	NW European population ²	UK population ³	Percentage occurring in UK
Bean Goose	Taiga Bean Goose	<i>Anser fabalis</i>	NB		53.0	80000	400	0.5
		<i>Anser fabalis fabalis</i>						
White-fronted Goose	Greenland White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>	NB		56.9	630000	26840	4.3
		<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>	NB		56.1 ^b	30000	21050	70.2 ^d
		<i>Anser albifrons albifrons</i>	NB	-27 ^a	93.0 ^b	600000	5790	1.0
			NB					
Greylag Goose	Icelandic Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	NB		90.1	105250	92610	88.0
		<i>Anser anser</i> (Icelandic)	NB		100 ^b	100000	82990	83.0 ^d
		<i>Anser anser</i> (Hebridean)	B		70.8 ^c			
		<i>Anser anser</i> (Hebridean)	NB			5250	9620	100 ^d
Barnacle Goose	Greenland Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	NB		71.4	44000	67000	100
		<i>Branta leucopsis</i> (Greenland)	NB		79.4 ^b	32000	45000	100 ^d
		<i>Branta leucopsis</i> (Svalbard)	NB		58.3 ^b	12000	22000	100 ^d
Brent Goose	Dark-bellied Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>	NB		99.0	325000	138710	42.7
		<i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i>	NB		100 ^b	300000	98110	32.7 ^d
		<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i> (Svalbard)	NB		71.7 ^b	5000	2900	58.0 ^d
		<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i> (East Canadian)	NB		89.6 ^b	20000	17730	88.7 ^d

Seasons are abbreviated to: B = Breeding; NB = Non-breeding.

1 Population change is for the 25-year period 1974/75 – 1999/2000.

2 NW European population estimates taken from Rose & Scott (1997).

3 UK population estimates calculated using Kershaw & Cranswick (in prep.) and WeBS five-year means for Northern Ireland.

a Subspecies would qualify on the Amber list as a declining non-breeder.

b Subspecies would qualify on the Amber list as a localised non-breeder.

c Subspecies would qualify on the Amber list as a localised breeder.

d Subspecies would qualify on the Amber list as internationally important during the non-breeding season.

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Red to the Amber list because their populations have more than doubled in the last 25 years (Red Kite, Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, Merlin *Falco columbarius* and Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*).

Thirty-one species remain Red listed. A small number of these are listed under different or additional criteria from the original BoCC list because of recent changes in population size or range. The rapid population decline of Common Scoter, for which it was originally Red listed, has lessened so it now qualifies as Amber on this criterion; it remains Red listed, however, because it has suffered a rapid contraction in its breeding range. Conversely, Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*, originally Red listed by virtue of its range contraction, is now known to be undergoing a rapid population decline. The population decline of the Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, also originally Red listed for its range contraction, has increased, so it now qualifies on rapid,

rather than moderate, population decline. In contrast, the populations of both Corn Crake and Stone-curlew have increased considerably over recent years and no longer qualify on the basis of a declining breeding population, though both remain Red listed because of a contraction in their breeding range. The Corn Crake remains, in addition, Globally Threatened and is a species which has suffered historical decline. The breeding range of Roseate Tern has contracted further and the species now qualifies as a Red-listed, rather than an Amber-listed, species under this criterion (table 8).

Despite the taxonomic uncertainties over the species status of the Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica* (Piertney *et al.* 2001), it remains Red listed based on a revised assessment of its global threat status using IUCN criteria. Assuming that it is a full species, it qualifies as Globally Threatened (Vulnerable) because of a restricted global breeding range (extent of occurrence).

Twenty-three species have moved from the Green to the Amber list (table 5). Of these, thirteen species (Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*, Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*, Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, House Martin *Delichon urbica*, Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*, Meadow Pipit, Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*, Grey Wagtail, Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*, Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*, Willow Warbler *P. trochilus*, Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* and Lesser Redpoll *Carduelis cabaret*) have moved because of declining populations. Even though the measured declines of Common Snipe, Woodcock, Common Redshank, Tree Pipit, Goldcrest and Lesser Redpoll are more than 50%, they are Amber rather than Red listed here because their population trends may well be unrepresentative owing to geographical or habitat-related bias. The Red Grouse is Amber listed based on composite information from game-bag records and local surveys from across the UK. Wood Warbler is Amber listed based on a new (BBS) dataset, while Grey Wagtail moves from Green to Amber because of its WBS trend.



269. Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*. This species is on the brink of being Red listed, as a result of steep population declines, especially in England and Wales; it remains Amber listed, however.

Meadow Pipit is Amber listed because of a population decline; indeed, had unrepresentative trends been allowed for in the original listing, it would have been Amber listed then. Four species moved from Green to Amber because they now qualify as rare breeders (Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* and Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*) (table 9). The remaining six species now qualify as localised breeders (Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*, Great Cormorant and Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*) or non-breeders (Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis* and Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*) (table 10), or as internationally important during the breeding season (Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*) or non-breeding season (Great Cormorant) (table 11).

As with the Red list, a number of species on the Amber list are listed under different or additional criteria compared with the original BoCC list because of recent changes in population size. Of these, seven species (Red-throated Diver, Slavonian Grebe, Northern Lapwing, Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*, Common Gull *Larus canus*, Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*, and Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*) have now all undergone moderate declines in their breeding populations (table 6). The Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* remains on the Amber list, even though it appears to have declined by around 60%, because the data from Seabird 2000 are incomplete at the time of writing. Based on new statistical analyses of CBC trends, Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* no longer qualifies as a declining breeder, but it remains on the Amber list because of an unfavourable conservation status in Europe. In addition, two species (Great Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* and Dunlin *Calidris alpina*) are now Amber listed because of declining populations during the non-breeding season.

Ten species have been moved from Amber to Green (table 5). Blackbird *Turdus merula* and Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* have

moved off the Amber list because their population declines have lessened, though only marginally so for Blackbird (its decline is now 22%). Little Gull, Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*, Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* and Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* all move to Green because they no longer qualify as rare breeders, Cetti's Warbler because of an increasing population, the other three because they have not bred in recent years. Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* and Crested Tit no longer qualify as localised breeders and European Golden Plover does not qualify as internationally important during the non-breeding season, based on new UK population estimates. Jack Snipe is classed as SPEC3 but is Green listed because it only occurs as a non-breeding species. In addition, Black-winged Stilt now drops off the BoCC list because its inclusion, as a RBBP species, was based on a single summering individual.



270. Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*. The population of this elusive woodland species has decreased sharply, and it is now Red listed.

George McCarthy

Discussion

This is the third review of the population status of birds in the UK. The analysis uses the most up-to-date information on populations to place species in one of three lists according to a set of scientific criteria. The new listings describe the population status of each species and will, when combined with additional information, help to inform conservation action during the period 2002-2007. The review does not consider legal frameworks for the conservation of species, which would be relevant to conservation action, nor does it look to recreate populations from the very distant past, some of which might be realistic to attain, others of which would not. The overall aim of the paper is to provide information which will help maintain and conserve the diversity of UK bird populations into the future.

Composition of the new and old lists

The new list provides an insight into the current state of the UK's birds. Effective and targeted

conservation action is largely responsible for moving five species from the Red list to the Amber list (Red Kite, Marsh Harrier, Osprey, Merlin and Dartford Warbler), because their populations have more than doubled in the last 25 years. This success is a direct reflection of the considerable efforts made by governmental and non-governmental organisations. We should not, however, lose sight of the fact that, in many cases, the populations of these species remain fragile, well below historic levels, and most are dependent on sustained conservation action.

Nine new species have been added to the Red list because of population decline (Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Ring Ouzel, Grasshopper Warbler, Savi's Warbler, Marsh Tit, Willow Tit, Common Starling, House Sparrow and Yellowhammer). They represent a relatively varied group of birds but it is notable that several are relatively widespread and common species. Indeed, sixteen species on the Red list have current populations in excess of 10,000 pairs or territories (table 1). In general, conservation

policies and actions to aid population recovery will tend to differ for common and rare species. The Yellowhammer is added to the list of rapidly declining farmland species, while the inclusion of Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Marsh Tit and Willow Tit suggests that some woodland species may be struggling to maintain their populations. According to the CBC, three other woodland species (Woodcock, Tree Pipit and Lesser Redpoll) have also declined by more than 50% over the last 25 years. These trends are, however, unlikely to be representative of their entire UK population, so they have been placed on the Amber list.

There are now two species (Great Ringed Plover and Dunlin) whose populations have declined by more than 25% over 25 years during the non-breeding season. This is in contrast to the original BoCC list, in which no species qualified by virtue of a declining population in the non breeding season. The admission of species under this criterion highlights the



271. Carl Bunting *Emberiza citus* is still Red listed, because of the contraction of its breeding range, even though it has responded well to recent efforts to stem its decline.

need for comprehensive monitoring of water-birds in the non-breeding season.

The new Red list has four more species than the last, and the Amber list has eleven more species. In the vast majority of cases, these differences reflect a genuine change in status, particularly for declining populations, rather than any alteration of the criteria used to derive the listings. Inevitably, a number of species come close to Red and Amber listing as declining breeders, but just fail to meet the criteria. The most prominent example on the threshold for Red listing is the Northern Lapwing, which has undergone a sharp population decline in many parts of the UK, particularly in Wales and England (Wilson *et al.* 2001), but overall qualifies under moderate decline for the Amber list. Other species in this category include Grey Wagtail, Hedge Accentor *Prunella modularis* and Fieldfare, all of which have declined by more than 40% in the last 25 years. Research is underway to investigate the reasons for the decline of some of these species (e.g. Northern Lapwing) and we continue to monitor their populations closely. Likewise, a small number of species fall just below the threshold for Amber listing, including Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* (non-breeding -24%), Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* (-21%) and Blackbird (-22%) over 25 years, Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus* (-23%) over 11 years (Whitfield in press), and Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* (-21%) over the last six years.

Time windows

This list is designed to inform discussion on the conservation status of birds over the period 2002-2007. It is based, as far as possible, on data from two periods: the last 25 years and the last 200 years (historical decline). The first category identifies current status; the second accounts for a small number of species whose current populations lie far below their historical levels. Both time windows are to some degree subjective, being driven by the availability of data. For the population decline criterion, the use of the 25-year window introduces an obvious difficulty: as it is rolled on from revision to revision, some species whose populations have fallen in the recent past will simply disappear from the Red list, even if they have not recovered to any degree. We consider this to be unsatisfactory: if conservation actions have failed to stimulate the recovery of such species towards their former

levels then, arguably, they should remain of conservation concern.

In devising the new list, there was much discussion about the need for an intermediate period between the last 25 years and the last 200 years, and we considered using 30-year trends alongside those for 25 years from the CBC. In this instance, there was nothing to be gained by using the longer period, because the trends proved to be so similar. Future revisions of the listings may, however, need to supplement the 25-year trends by longer periods (e.g. 35-year trends).

An alternative approach to the same problem is to move a species off the Red list only when it can be shown to have 'recovered'. This would mean that, once Red listed, a species would remain so, in a 'Red shadow', until it can be shown to have recovered. We considered two ways of defining recovery. In the first, it is suggested that a species can move from Red to Amber only when it can be shown to have doubled in numbers during the previous 25 years. In the second, it is moved to Amber only when it can be shown to have reached half its former population level. Each approach has shortcomings: the first does not work well when populations become very small (less than 20 pairs) because a doubling might, in absolute terms, be relatively trivial, while the second requires an informed decision about an ideal or natural population level. Adoption of either method could increase the length of the Red list in the event that conservation action failed to reverse rapid declines and, by inference, downgrade the importance of more recent trends (i.e. over the last 25 years). This approach would alter the balance of the listing procedure to highlight declines in the past. It should be noted that this is not an issue for this version of the list: no species is removed from the Red list owing to the changed period sampled by the 25-year time window. It is for those involved in future BoCC revisions to decide how to tackle such issues.

Absolute change versus rates of change

In this paper, we follow Gibbons *et al.* (1996a) in using absolute changes in population size or level over fixed periods, rather than using the rates of change, regardless of the time span. The latter approach is used within the North American listing process (Beissinger *et al.* 2000;

Carter *et al.* 2000) and was considered by this review. Some of the arguments for using the rates of change are compelling, since we can convert population-trend figures for any period into per annum rates and judge these against our predefined thresholds. Ultimately, it is the rate of decline, i.e. the slope of the trend, in which we are most interested. A 50% decline over 25 years, for example, is equivalent to a 2.7% per annum change; consequently, per annum changes of 2.7% or more could qualify species for the Red list. The same procedure could be used to identify Amber-list species, using a per annum rate of $\geq 1.14\%$.

One of the drawbacks of this approach, however, is the inherent uncertainty in extrapolating trends from relatively short periods to a nominal 25-year span. For example, a trend over five, or even ten years, may be at a rate equivalent to a 50% reduction over 25 years, but it is very different from a measured trend *throughout* that 25-year period. The shorter the time span, the more uncertain this extrapolation becomes. In fact, from what we know about population fluctuations in birds, it would seem unsafe to assume anything approaching a constant rate of change. The other problem with this approach is that it would depart from the original listing process and the new list would partly reflect changes in the method, rather than changes in the status of birds.

A further complication underlying the listing process is that the halving of a population of, for example, Wrens *Troglodytes troglodytes* might be viewed as of lower conservation concern than the halving of a population of Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos*, because their life histories, and hence their intrinsic ability to recover, are so different. One can imagine ways in which life history could be incorporated into this review, but it is not straightforward. These are likely to be issues for future revisions to consider.

The use of IUCN regional guidelines

The recent publication of regional guidelines for the application of the IUCN Red-list criteria (Gärdenfors 2001; Gärdenfors *et al.* 2001) opens the way for future revisions of BoCC to follow their lead. Greater standardisation of listing criteria would be highly desirable because it would make comparisons between countries more transparent and meaningful. The work by IUCN remains in progress,

however, and we considered the guidelines too preliminary to be adopted within this review. The criteria have been used for a range of taxa, including birds, in Sweden, Finland and Switzerland (Gärdenfors 2001), although they are not without problems. It should be borne in mind that the guidelines identify regional extinction probabilities and *not* population status *per se*. As described earlier, the IUCN advises that conservation priorities should consider a range of practical, logistical and political factors in addition to population status. The outcome in Switzerland, for example, is that their new bird list is partially based on the regional guidelines and, by necessity, partially on specific, new criteria (Keller & Bollmann 2001). A potential problem is that if the 'new criteria' differ between countries then the lists become much less comparable. The other major difficulty in applying the regional guidelines is to decide if a 'metapopulation' is a source or a sink (Pulliam 1988; Watkinson & Sutherland 1995). To apply the criteria at a national level, one would first apply the global criteria and then decide whether to upgrade, downgrade or accept the resulting category based on the probability that the population could be 'rescued' by immigrants from neighbouring countries (Gärdenfors 2001; Gärdenfors *et al.* 2001). The problem, even in a country like the UK where good data exist, is that we lack information on the structure of 'metapopulations' and such information is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to collect. The alternative would be to use a surrogate or surrogates of immigration/emigration probability to identify sources and sinks.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, IUCN's draft guidelines should be warmly welcomed as they begin a process of discussion and development which will help to standardise methodologies and terminology in future Red lists. In a separate exercise, we are comparing the listing processes, as applied to birds in the UK, using IUCN's regional guidelines and the criteria in this paper.

Data availability

The monitoring information available for this review is unparalleled when compared with other countries and other taxa. The monitoring data for birds in the UK are far more diverse, more detailed and cover a much longer time span than in most other countries. There are,



Tony Hamblin

272. Willow Tit *Parus montanus*. Like the Marsh Tit *P. palustris*, this is another woodland species which is now on the Red list because its population is in decline.

nonetheless, problems of data availability and quality for some species. For example, a whole group of scarce but widespread breeding species are poorly covered by current and former monitoring schemes, such as Little Grebe, Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, Common Snipe, Woodcock, Eurasian Curlew, Common Redshank, Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* and Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*. Among the rare breeding birds, there is a group which occurs sporadically and unpredictably over large, often remote areas, e.g. Fieldfare and Redwing *Turdus iliacus*, which makes data collection and interpretation extremely difficult. In addition to the problem of species coverage, there is that of small sample sizes. Since rare breeding birds occur in very low numbers, a small numerical difference from year to year can equate to significant proportional change. We have attempted to overcome this problem by comparing population figures averaged over a number of years. We had also considered, but then dismissed, the idea of setting arbitrary thresholds below which species were excluded from the assessment. The obvious problem is that this would exclude high- and low-quality data in an indiscriminate manner.

There are three other groups of species

where current monitoring information is inadequate: passage seabirds (e.g. shearwaters and skuas), which probably occur in considerable numbers in UK waters; widespread wintering species which occur in terrestrial habitats (e.g. European Golden Plover, Northern Lapwing, Fieldfare and Redwing); and, finally, several waders and waterfowl for which it is extremely difficult to assess the size and/or trends, and hence the importance, of their passage populations.

Subspecies

This paper follows previous work (Batten *et al.* 1990; Gibbons *et al.* 1996a; JNCC 1996) in considering only full species, although we present comparable information for certain subspecies or populations of geese (table 12). The latter are something of a special case because some of the international treaties related to their conservation are based on biogeographical populations (e.g. the European Union's Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds, and the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds). While there are various other subspecies present in the UK, the argument to promote their

conservation over full species is not compelling and there is uncertainty over the genetic divergence among subspecies and species. Ongoing research by the BOU may well result in some current subspecies taking on full species status and we recommend that future revisions of this list continue to follow the expert advice provided by the BOU.

Introduced species

Introduced species, as defined by the BOU, are excluded from this assessment because their populations are of no conservation concern within the UK; except, that is, for their potentially harmful impact upon native taxa both here and abroad as their populations increase. It was once argued that because the UK supports populations of globally uncommon species, such as Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*, Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus* and Lady Amherst's Pheasant *C. amherstiae*, special attention should be paid to their conservation in this country, but we see no compelling reason to attach conservation concern to these species in a UK context. Indeed, if these species have conservation problems, then the appropriate response is to address the causes of these within their native ranges.

Country-based lists

Devolved governance within the UK raises the possibility of population reviews for individual countries. Such lists need to be hierarchical in nature so that Global, European and UK status are overlaid upon species' status within countries. This is necessary to ensure that the wider conservation status of species is considered within countries. The inherent mobility of birds, and connectivity of populations in the UK, complicates the interpretation of such lists. One of the practical problems in carrying out country reviews is the availability of adequate monitoring data, because monitoring programmes are largely UK-based, particularly for more common and widespread species. The most obvious pitfall in drawing up lists at increasingly small spatial scales is that extreme rarities within a region can be elevated in status, even though they may be widespread and abundant elsewhere. On the other hand, conservation action at the edge of a species' range may be important in maintaining the extent of its range. It is also possible for the fate of a non-migratory species in a region to be

determined by events entirely outside its borders and beyond its control, through emigration and immigration. A further problem is that as areas and sample sizes become smaller, trend analysis becomes more uncertain, for some species adequate data is completely lacking, and hence species selection is difficult and prone to error. The main implication is that robust regional listings require support for monitoring at the appropriate spatial scale. Nonetheless, lists which are able to target species that have suffered a disproportionate decline within a region or country, and can thus engage and communicate with the relevant decision makers, might serve a useful purpose.

The future

The dynamic nature of bird populations means that numbers and range can alter rapidly over relatively short periods. It is thus appropriate to review the status of bird populations on a regular basis. We recommend that reviews be carried out every five years, and for the next one to be published in 2008.

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From the Rarities Committee's files: A White-winged Black Tern in an unusually advanced state of moult



John Wright

ZEISS

When evaluating records of non-passerine species, it is relatively commonplace for BBRC to review details of moult as part of the assessment process. The amount of published information on the timing and variability of moult tends to be limited, however, and a bird that displays features which are poorly documented may be a trap for the unwary. Most autumn records of young White-winged Black Terns *Chlidonias leucopterus* which BBRC receive are of individuals in full juvenile plumage. Malling Olsen & Larsson (1995) state that 'juvenile plumage is largely retained during autumn migration, but scattered pale grey feathers can appear [on the mantle/scapulars] from September'. *BWP* states that timing is rather variable: some individuals start moulting in September and by November show new head and body feathers, while others do not reach this stage until late February or March.

A White-winged Black Tern at Rutland Water on 5th September 1999 was already well advanced in its moult from juvenile to first-winter plumage. It was found by JW, whose

field notes record the observation as follows:

I first located it [the White-winged Black Tern] at 11.40 am feeding with 20 Black Terns *C. niger* (these were 'fresh in') at a range of about 350 m, but in appalling light (extremely bright). It did venture out of the bright sunlight several times, however, to reveal clean breast-sides, restricted black head markings and a pale rump. After about 30 minutes it landed on the far shore with most of the Black Terns, and a quick dash round the reservoir enabled excellent views of all the terns on the shoreline, especially from late afternoon onwards when the sun moved round to the west. The description and drawings were all made on 5th September because work commitments prevented me from visiting the site during the remainder of its stay (it was reported until 9th September).

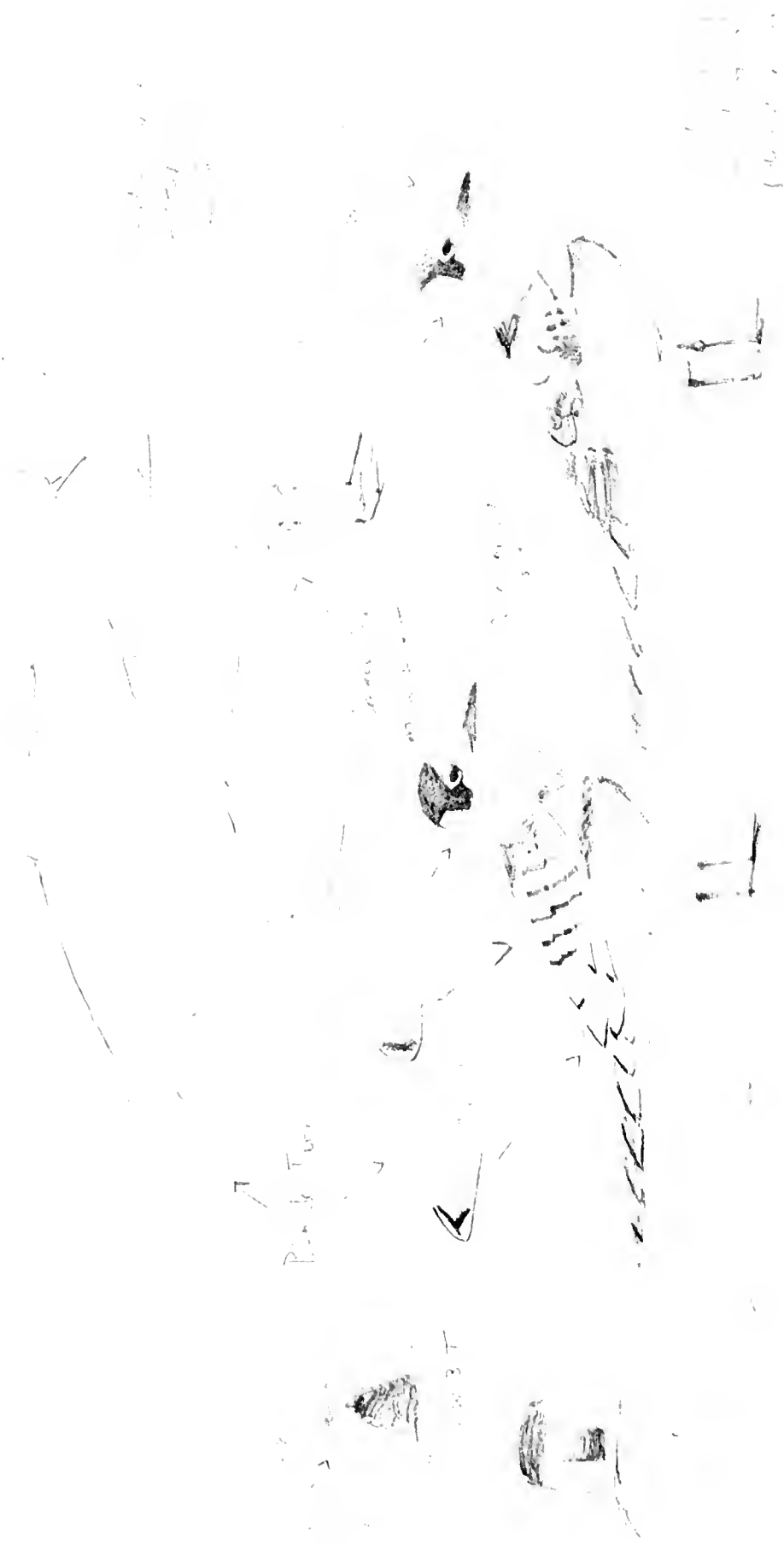
Description

The black ear-covert patch appeared almost isolated, with extensive white above and behind the eye. The white behind the ear-coverts reached up higher than on Black Tern. Forehead and fore-

head in
5. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100.

Black & Shaded Terns
on the ground & flying

Black Tern



John Wright

Juv → plain white
feet and water

5/9/99

Juv Scaps form different pattern on this side



black ear-covert patch almost appears isolated. white behind ear-covert reaches up higher than Black.

mottled front to crown

W.W.B.T

Slightly streaked half the Black

Black Tern

crown solid

ear-covert more solid with less white reaching up behind

Pale gray insular Scaps

Primary shade pale than Black's with dark sub-tern marks quite obvious

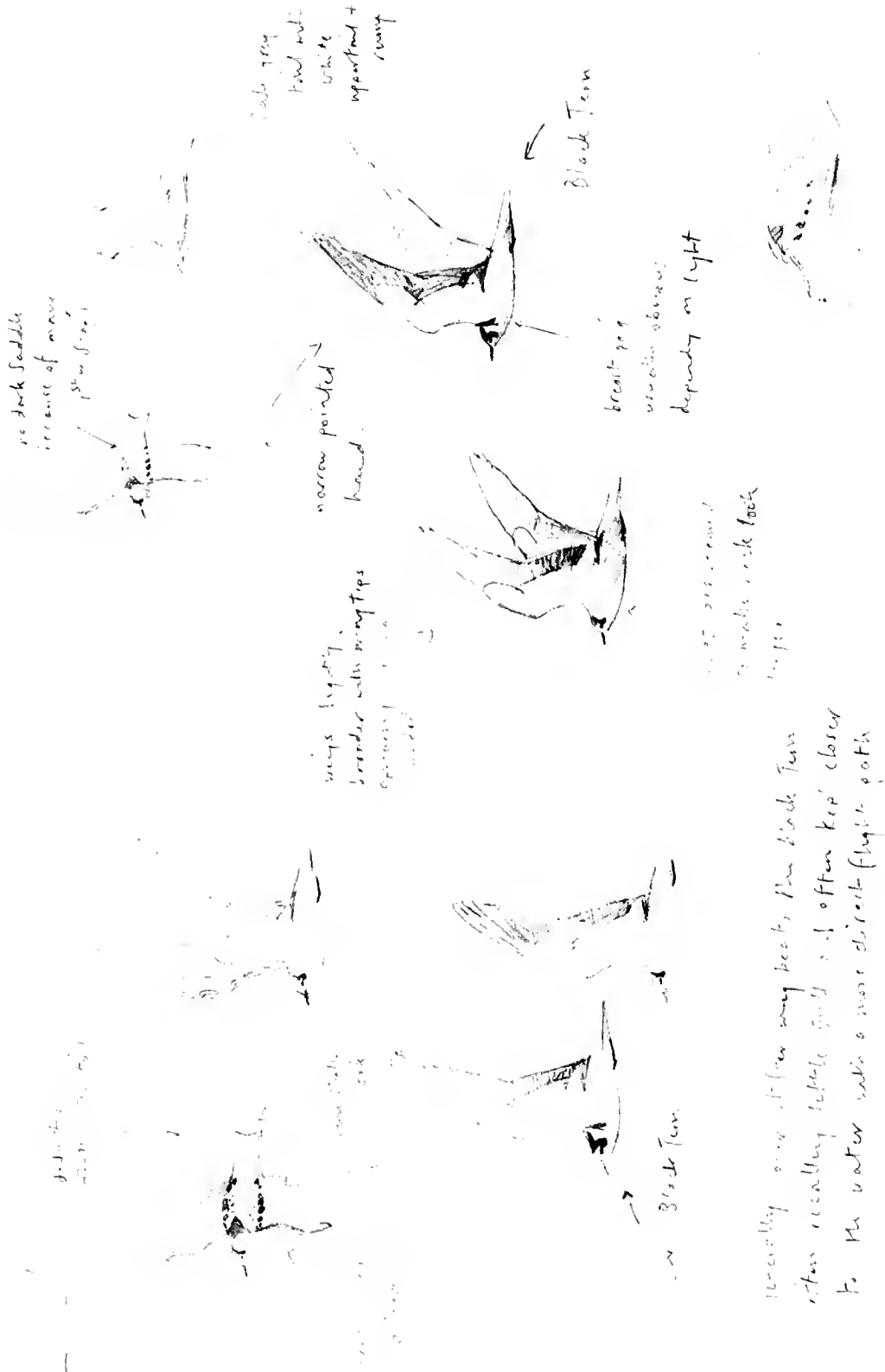
Plain brownish feet ads

legs shade longer than Black

Pale forming front ads is obvious

narrow dark leading edge to wing

feet not clearly obvious



Jan 2008

crown mottled with white, more solidly dark at rear of crown. Dark hindneck barely joined nape. The mantle was dark brown, but most of the scapulars were pale grey first-winter feathers. Just a few dark brown juvenile scapulars were retained (mostly the lower ones, on both sides). The tertials were dark brown, with no obvious fringes or subterminal marks. Median and greater coverts pale grey but not always obviously pale; innermost greater coverts with internal markings. Tail grey (white outer rectrices not noticed) and rump white. The primaries had quite obvious dark internal markings and there was a slight silvery cast to the outer part of the closed wing. Underparts white, breast-sides clean. Blackish-brown bill a little shorter and stubbier than that of Black Tern. Legs were reddish, with longer tibia than Black Tern but this was sometimes obscured by feathering.

In flight

Compared to the Black Terns, the wings were broader, the wing-tip blunter and the body a shade more compact. The typical dark saddle was missing, because of the many pale, first-winter scapulars. The white rump, although obvious, was not as striking as usual, owing to the largely pale saddle. The pale 'arm' was fairly obvious but, again, because of the pale saddle, it lacked the typical sharp contrast of juveniles. Its flight was generally steadier, more direct than that of the Black Terns, recalling Little Gull *Larus minutus*, often keeping closer to the water. The wingbeats often appeared shallower, with the body tending to move less, but these differences were not always apparent.

On the ground

On the ground, it appeared a shade smaller than the Black Terns, with a more rounded head,

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slightly shorter bill and usually more tibia showing.

This record illustrates several points of interest. White-winged Black Terns are scarce and irregular migrants and, because they tend to hang around for a few days, a birder who is prepared to travel could see one or two individuals in Britain during most years. Despite this, there is still the opportunity to learn something new and useful. In the past, BBRC assumed that first-calendar-year White-winged Black Terns would not show this degree of moult in early September, and at least one recent record received a fairly rough ride based on this perception. A high-quality submission such as that published here is of great help when considering what, at first sight, seems to be an 'unusual' plumage, and this record leaves no doubt that some individuals *can* show an advanced state of moult to first-winter plumage in September. Clearly, this must be taken into consideration during future assessments.

This record also demonstrates the value of taking notes. Even without these sketches, BBRC was able to build up an accurate picture of the extent of moult of this individual from the detail in the actual notes. We are not all blessed with an extraordinary ability with pencil and paints but we should all be capable of making good field notes. The ability to take detailed notes only comes with practice, however, and should not be kept for those rare occasions when we find a great rarity. Despite the onset of the 'digi-world', note taking is not dead.

Reference

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Racial identification of Pallid Swift

The Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* found moribund on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, on 26th October 1996 was the first Scottish record, and the ninth for Britain & Ireland since 1958 (Gray 1997, 1998; Rogers *et al.* 1997). Significantly, as a specimen record, it presented an opportunity to determine the subspecies involved.

Geographical variation in Pallid Swift is clinal, and the three subspecies recognised are considered to be barely distinguishable in the field (Cramp 1985; Chantler & Driessens 1995). It is, therefore, unsurprising that little attempt was made to establish the subspecies concerned in any of the previous eight (sight-only) records, and the *BOU Checklist of Birds of Britain and Ireland* (Knox 1992) records the species' status as 'Scarce visitor, race undetermined.'

The North Ronaldsay corpse was preserved as a skin (NMSZ 2002.85) at the National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh; it was sexed as a male and subsequently compared with series of Pallid Swift skins there and at the Natural History Museum, Tring.

Broad differences in breeding distribution and plumage among the three taxa may be summarised as follows:

- *pallidus* (Banc d'Arguin, Saharan hills, Egypt through to Pakistan): noticeably paler, more greyish-brown, white throat more extensive, wing length shorter on average.
- *brehuorum* (Canary Islands, Madeira, coasts of North Africa, Iberia, southern France, Italy, through Mediterranean to Greece and Cyprus): darker, browner, white throat more reduced, wing longer on average.
- *illyricus* (eastern Adriatic): darkest race, wing length similar to *brehuorum*.

In comparison with other Pallid Swift skins, the Orkney bird proved a more reasonable match in overall plumage coloration with *brehuorum*. Similarly, the relatively restricted white throat-patch was typical of *brehuorum* and bore little resemblance to nominate *pallidus*. Skins of *illyricus* appeared darker than that of the Orkney bird. On geographical grounds it would be a reasonable presumption that *brehuorum* is the likeliest taxon to occur in Britain & Ireland, and the Orkney skin appears to confirm this expectation. The recent record

of *illyricus* in Denmark in 1993 (Thorup 2001) shows, however, that occurrence of that subspecies in higher latitudes is also possible.

One noticeable feature of the Orkney bird, also commented on by the original finders, was the extensive pale fringing of the plumage, indicating recent moult. In addition, the wing length (maximum flattened chord) of the Orkney skin (more than one year after preparation) was 162 mm (compared with 167 mm when fresh). This apparent shortness of the wing compared with normal *brehuorum* was due to the still-growing outermost primary (P10), while P9 was probably also incomplete. Individuals finishing moult as early as October are likely to be second-calendar-year, or possibly older, non-breeding birds (C. S. Roselaar, verbally).

A skin in the National Museum of Ireland represents the only record for Britain & Ireland before 1958 (Smiddy & O'Sullivan 1994). It is of a male which was picked up in a weak condition near the lighthouse at St John's Point, Co. Down, on 30th October 1913. An attempt should be made to establish the subspecies of this specimen. A Pallid Swift was ringed in Norfolk in November 1999 and held in captivity for ten days, though, unfortunately, little attempt seems to have been made to determine the race (Preston 1999).

In a useful analysis of 43 records from north of the breeding areas, Dierschke (2001) shows that records of Pallid Swift in northern Europe tend to be in May and June, conforming to the breeding period of birds in the eastern part of the species' range. Conversely, sightings in western Europe occur from spring to late autumn, indicating a link to the western breeding populations. The increasing frequency of reports from northern Europe and, in particular, the recent records from Orkney, Sweden (Malling Olsen 1995), Denmark (Thorup 2001) and Germany (Dierschke 2001) tend to support the impression of a northerly range extension for this species (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997). Of course, to some extent the increased frequency may also be the result of improved observer discrimination from allied species.

I am grateful to Cees Roselaar who provided helpful comments and discussion; I also thank Robert Prys-Jones and Mark Adams for access to the NHM collections.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Phil Chantler, author of *Swifts: A guide to the Swifts and Treeswifts of the World*, has commented as follows: 'As Robert McGowan concludes, the Orkney Pallid Swift was most likely to be of the subspecies *brehmorum*. The difficulties of assigning individual vagrants to a subspecies with any certainty are, however, considerable. Many of the plumage features acknowledged by RYM are rather subjective and need to be tempered by considering variables such as age and state of moult. For example, it is instructive to compare the photographs of the 1978 individual in Kent (*Brit. Birds* 74: 170-178) with those of one in the hand in Norfolk in 1999 (Preston 1999; *Brit. Birds* 93: plate 324). The former, a relatively worn individual, appears strikingly pale, with considerable contrast between the various feather tracts, while the latter, a fresh juvenile, was darker than many observers considered this species could be.

'Subspecific limits within Pallid Swift are not well defined. Individuals from the eastern Adriatic (*illyricus*) are darker than those from other populations, but there is considerable variation within the acknowledged range of *brehmorum*. Birds from Cyrenaica, northwest Egypt, the Aegean and Cyprus are relatively dark and have previously been categorised as *illyricus* (while those from the western Adriatic could possibly also be included within this taxon).'

Great Spotted Woodpecker roosting during storm

During the afternoon of 24th September 2001, migrants were moving through the dunes at Holme-next-the-Sea, Norfolk, apparently being pushed ahead of a succession of sharp rain squalls. At least eight, presumably migrant, Great Spotted Woodpeckers *Dendrocopos major* had been recorded, and I was watching a juvenile actively exploring the trunk of a conifer when a thunderstorm broke out. At this point,

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the woodpecker braced itself against the trunk, tucked its head under its wing and apparently went to sleep. It remained in this position for at least 20 minutes, during heavy rain.

Although *BWP* states that: 'Fledged young normally roost clinging to tree trunk in the open for first few days but soon change to holes', I can find no reference to such behaviour being observed as a direct reaction to weather conditions.

House Martins feeding on the ground

On 14th September 2001, during a period of low pressure with moderate northwest winds, I observed a large number of hirundines congregating on the roof of a tower close to Covenham Reservoir, Lincolnshire. On closer

inspection, I estimated that there were about 200 House Martins *Delichon urbica* either flying around or perching on the building. Some flew off to a nearby stubble field which was being ploughed, where they joined other House

Martins settling on the recently turned soil, apparently feeding from the ground. When the group took to the air, I was amazed to see that it contained at least 700 individuals. Other

hirundines were feeding over the surface of the reservoir, but only House Martins settled on the field.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Angela Turner has commented that feeding on the ground is a well-known behaviour for hirundines (for example, see *Brit. Birds* 44: 65; 45: 69; and 59: 499) but this note records exceptionally large numbers.

Alarm calls of Barn Swallow

Peter Atherton and others have described a low-pitched alarm call used by Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* in response to Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* (*Brit. Birds* 90: 526; 92: 51-52). During the 20 years I have spent living in Hampshire and Dorset, the great majority of my Hobby sightings have resulted from listening out for this call. If Barn Swallows give the call loudly and repeatedly, a Hobby can usually be located simply by looking in the direction from which the swallows are flying. I had presumed that this low-pitched call was given specifically in response to Hobbies. Some years ago, however, I saw a small group of Barn Swallows reacting to a Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* in an area of narrow valleys and steep hills in Dorset. Initially, the swallows gave their usual loud, high-pitched alarm call as they mobbed the hawk; the latter, as it moved away, took advantage of an updraught to rise very quickly up a hillside, and as soon as it was above their level the swallows switched to the low-pitched 'Hobby alarm'.

Barn Swallows perhaps distinguish between 'danger at low altitude', when the best strategic place is directly above the threat, and 'danger above', when the only safe place is as far away as

possible. This is usually equivalent to a distinction between Eurasian Sparrowhawk and Hobby as a result of the predators' differing hunting behaviours, but it is not invariably so. This does not, of course, diminish the value of the information to observers.

I saw further evidence for this interpretation on 18th August 1998, when a Hobby flew over my garden at an altitude of about 15 m. It was being mobbed by an adult Barn Swallow, which was diving at it and giving the typical loud 'sparrowhawk-mobbing call'. Also, in August 1999, on Cape Clear, Co. Cork, I observed several Barn Swallows feeding in the area of the Observatory. When they gave the 'Hobby call' and flew northeast, I immediately searched for the reason and saw a male Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* making a long stoop towards them from the southwest.

To my ear the 'Hobby call' sounds like a very intense and more repeated version of what is described in *BWP* (Vol. 5) as the 'follow-contact call', used by female Barn Swallows to induce males or young to follow them. This suggests to me that the underlying message of the 'Hobby call' is an urgent 'fly in this direction'.

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Tameness and unusual feeding behaviour of Sardinian Warbler

In the garden of my house in Mallorca, I regularly feed bread scraps to the numerous House Sparrows *Passer domesticus*. During January 1999, a male Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* appeared regularly, and became extremely adept at hopping from beneath an Oleander *Nerium oleander* bush, taking some of

the scraps and making off with the prize.

On two occasions, when scraps were scattered at some distance from the bush because of rain puddles, I was amazed to observe the Sardinian Warbler run (not hop) at speed from the bush, in a manner reminiscent of a Sanderling *Calidris alba*, snatch a morsel and fly off. When

running, the head, body and tail were held horizontally, with the neck stretched forwards.

Since then, I have observed Sardinian Warblers regularly taking bread scraps; far from being shy, they are confiding and open. Each year, one or two pairs nest in my Mallorcan

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The note by Brian Hill (*Brit. Birds* 95: 194-195) reminded me of a very similar experience. During 22nd-29th March 1995, at Hammamet, Tunisia, a pair of Sardinian Warblers *Sylvia melanocephala* came regularly to our balcony for biscuit crumbs. The female was very tame (see plate 273), the male less so. The food was eaten *in situ*, not carried away, so they were presumably not breeding.



D. Warden

273. Female Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*, Hammamet, Tunisia, March 1995.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT These observations are most intriguing. It certainly seems that Sardinian Warblers will occasionally become surprisingly bold and confident towards human beings. Nevertheless, this species, the commonest and most ubiquitous of the *Sylvia* warblers in southern Europe, is normally considerably more secretive and retiring; in most situations, it is heard far more frequently than it is seen. Bearing in mind the relative abundance of the Sardinian Warbler throughout the Mediterranean region, these examples of tameness must be considered rare. We should, therefore, be pleased to receive any further reports comparable to the above two and that published earlier.

Dartford Warbler eating fruit

BWP (Vol. 6) records that the diet of the Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* in Britain consists exclusively of arthropods. This is presumably due to the comparative scarcity of fruit on its heathland habitat, since fruits are recorded in the diet of this species in continental Europe (e.g. Shirihai *et al.* 2001; *BWP*). On 19th September 1997, at Pennington Marsh, Hampshire, PC watched a Dartford Warbler feeding on berries of Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. ('blackberries').

When this observation came to the attention of DAC, it prompted an immediate response. On 27th September 1985, at Warsash, Hampshire, DAC had observed a female Dartford Warbler feeding on blackberries, and on a couple of occasions in the 1980s, at the same site, he had seen this species taking berries of Elder *Sambucus nigra* in autumn. Although this warbler's diet appears to consist almost wholly of arthropods (e.g. Simms 1985), DAC had, at various times since the mid 1960s, observed

Dartford Warblers feeding on berries outside the breeding season in southern Europe; he had assumed, therefore, that his observations in Hampshire were not particularly unusual, but they preceded the publication of the relevant volume (Vol. 6) of *BWP*.

BWP lists fruits of the genera *Rubus*, *Daphne*, *Myrtus*, *Pistacea*, *Vaccinium*, *Phyllyria* and *Phytolacca* as being eaten by Dartford Warblers on the Continent. Under 'Diet', Shirihai *et al.* (2001) mentioned the first five of these, adding 'and probably many others'. It may be worth pointing out that one of these others, at least in Britain, is *Sambucus*.

Furthermore, in January 1990, in Kent, a Dartford Warbler was seen on at least two occasions to take berries of Sea-buckthorn *Hippophae rhamnoides* (Cantelo & Roser 1993). The warbler was in an area of scrub, dominated

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Given the fondness of most members of the genus *Sylvia* for blackberries, these observations are perhaps not unexpected, but they appear, along with the Kent record, to represent the first documented evidence of berry-eating by this species in Britain.

Spotted Flycatchers building second nest while still feeding first brood

In 1999, and again in 2001, one of three pairs of Spotted Flycatchers *Muscicapa striata* nesting in my garden in Blunham, Bedfordshire, nested on the top of a security light on the side of the house. Several days before the brood of four nestlings fledged, the adults began to build a second nest, in a nestbox also on the side of the house, 15 m from and out of sight of the first nest, but only 1 m from my study window. They were simultaneously feeding the nestlings, and, later completed the building of the second nest while continuing to feed the fledglings. That the same adult flycatchers were involved was easy to confirm, since they used the same small dead cherry tree *Prunus* as a perch from which they not only caught insects for their young, but also

by that plant, on low sand dunes, and the observers wondered whether its behaviour was a result of the relatively unusual habitat being exploited or, perhaps, was due to the warbler's atypically confiding nature permitting such food items to be identified.

Having watched the foraging activities of Dartford Warblers in southern Britain on numerous occasions, especially in autumn, we would now consider fruit-eating by this species in Britain to be, at best, uncommon.

References

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 Shirihai, H., Gargallo, G., Helbig, A. J., Harris, A., & Cottridge, D. 2001. *Sylvia Warblers: Identification, taxonomy and phylogeny of the genus Sylvia*. London.
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made sorties to collect nesting material. In both years, the pair of Spotted Flycatchers successfully reared eight young, four from each nest.

The advantages of this strategy to a migrant dependent on flying summer insects, which has only a short breeding season in northern Europe, compressed into about 14 weeks (my garden breeders arrive in the first half of May and depart in mid August), are obvious. I have not, however, been able to find previous reference in the literature to this behaviour, which is likely to go unnoticed unless the two nests are watched easily and are close together, as in this instance.

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Letters

The Dungeness petrel – a response from the observers

While it came as no great surprise to the observers of the 'Dungeness petrel' (*Brit. Birds* 95: 156-165) that the record was rejected, this feeling merely reflects what we take to be a widespread view among observers: that the BBRC finds it very difficult to accept major rarities which are not seen by large numbers of observers and, ideally, photographed. This is clearly a situation which will occur more frequently with seabirds than other groups, especially those observed from land.

With reference to this particular record and the reasons for its rejection, we would like to make the following comments:

1. It would appear that the first American expert more or less accepts the record. He/she agrees that the plumage description is fine but queries the choice of the word 'fluttering'. At this point, it seems that the use of English is being taken as a reason to reject the record. A check of the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'flutter' as 'flap wings in flying' and 'wave or flap quickly or irregularly': the use of this word could, therefore, be applied to most flying birds. This expert also agrees that the date, although outside the expected range, is probably fine because there is much reduced recording effort at this time of year. We believe that the date is, arguably, exactly when this species might occur in British waters.
2. The second expert queries the use of the phrase 'trailing a gannet' and says that he would expect a Herald Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana* to leave a Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* standing. This really is a bit much! The description does say that the petrel was first seen flying behind a gannet, but it does not say that it remained behind the gannet throughout the period of observation. We do not know what happened to the gannet as, not surprisingly, we were concentrating on the petrel.
3. On page 162 we read that, 'given (i) the brevity of views and the poor weather conditions, (ii) some relatively minor discrepancies between the two submitted descriptions...this submission would be unlikely to make the grade as a "first for

Britain"'. In answer to (i), just how long is required to identify a species? Two minutes is actually quite a long time to watch a bird, and, as three people saw it, it could be argued that it was observed for six or seven minutes in total. Many identifications are established with much briefer views than this, often instantaneously and without consciously thinking about it. In this instance, three observers saw the bird and were unable to identify it at the time. They made notes and *were* able to identify it following further research. The poor weather conditions are exactly those when rare seabirds are likely to be seen. In answer to (ii), we would argue that the slight discrepancies between the descriptions would point to honesty and a lack of collusion in writing them up; even within the article it says that the discrepancies were 'entirely compatible with the difference in optical equipment used'.

4. The comment that, 'All the members expressed a degree of sympathy for the observers, who, through no fault of their own and in very difficult circumstances, did not quite see the petrel well enough.' In all seriousness, we are not sure what more we could have seen apart from eye and leg colour. The plumage and flight action are well described. To expect anything else in such a situation is unrealistic.

We would also like to make the following, more general points:

- a. It would be interesting to know just what makes an 'expert'. For instance, the second expert has seen all of seven or eight individuals, five of which were dark-morphs, and all were seen in calm weather. This does not seem to be a great deal of experience. Most, if not all, of the American observations have, by definition, been made in relatively calm weather; pelagic trips do not take place in severe winds. As such, how are they able to comment on flight action under the conditions in which the Dungeness petrel was seen?
- b. It is well known that there are many claims of rare seabirds being seen from other well-

watched seawatching locations in, for example, Cornwall and Yorkshire, which have never been submitted because observers believe that they would be rejected. We understand that there have been at least two other claimed Herald Petrels, which have never been submitted. Had these earlier records been submitted and accepted, would the record of the Dungeness petrel be good enough to be accepted as, say, a 'second' or 'third' for Britain? We suspect that it would be. What would happen if these earlier records were now submitted?

David Walker and Owen Leyshon

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The Dungeness petrel

The account of the encounter with the probable Herald Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana* (*Brit. Birds* 95: 156-165) gives a rare insight into the mindset of the BBRC. There are two significant portions of the narrative which are worth analysing.

Firstly, the record was felt unlikely to make the grade as a 'first for Britain' because of:

1. the brevity of views and the poor weather conditions;
2. some relatively minor discrepancies between the two submitted descriptions;
3. the fact that the observers had little or no experience of the possible confusion species;
4. the enormity of the record.

Taking each point at a time:

1. Surely it is the field notes that matter? How they were obtained is irrelevant, whether over two minutes or two hours, whether from the back of a car or on a windy headland.
2. To expect different observers to come up with identical field notes under such circumstances is unrealistic. In fact, the discrepancies show that the observers were honest.

David Ferguson

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What, I would like to know, does the BBRC believe the trio of Dungeness observers saw if it was not a Herald Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana* (*Brit. Birds* 95: 156-165)? Colin Bradshaw admits that 'there was no doubt that the three observers had seen an amazing seabird', and as

- c. There does seem to be a great reluctance by BBRC to accept such extreme records. We feel that BBRC appears to look at ways to reject records, rather than approaching them positively; and then starts picking at the use of English in descriptions in order to find fault. With reference to this particular record, while a few minor points may have been missing, the only serious fault the American experts could find was with the word 'fluttering'. It would appear that you have to be a linguist as well.

3. Does previous experience matter? Again, the record should stand or fall on the field notes.
4. Surely this, too, is irrelevant? There seems to be a different standard for a 'first', which I find irrational.

The second significant comment is 'the observers...did not quite see the petrel well enough'. This invites three questions:

1. What did they miss?
2. What should they have seen that would have confirmed identification as a Herald Petrel?
3. What else could it have been, based on the submitted field notes?

These questions were not asked, let alone answered. In fact, the reasoning for rejecting the record shows a marked lack of detailed analysis. Given that, in the experts' opinions, the plumage features were consistent with Herald Petrel, and no confusion species were suggested, it seems that the only factual reason for rejecting the record was its unusual flight, which was well described by the observers. This is a flimsy excuse for rejecting such a magnificent record.

far as I can make out, nobody has suggested that it was a different species. It seems that this record was not rejected because of misidentification, but because the circumstances of the observation precluded a more detailed description, or photographic evidence.

If this is a fair summary of BBRC's position, then it occurs to me that we need a third category of record besides the present black-and-white 'accepted' and 'rejected'. This would be used for records where the identification is accepted, but the level of supporting evidence falls short of the standard expected for 'full acceptance'. It would be roughly equivalent to the North American 'hypothetical' category, although I would prefer a more positive term, such as 'provisionally accepted'. Indeed, would it not be more useful to distinguish those rejected records which are manifestly misidentifications, from ones where the identification is not in

Andrew Duff

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The account of a probable Herald Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana* past Dungeness, Kent (*Brit. Birds* 95: 156-165), deserves some comment. There is a vast series of these birds from South Trindade in the Natural History Museum, which shows that (like some other gadfly-petrels) this is not so much a polymorphic as an exceptionally variable species. If it was thought surprising that there was so much white on the underwing of a pale/intermediate-morph bird, there is another confusion species to consider which is not mentioned – the Bermuda Petrel *P. cahow* – although this species does not normally have a breast-band, and shows more dark on the rear than the front of the underwing (*Birding* 30: 18-36).

The observation lacks a fundamental piece of information, namely the direction of the wind. Assuming it was westerly, the behaviour of the bird is exactly what one might expect if it was exhausted and trying to beat back to the Atlantic after being blown up the English Channel in a storm: flying straight, low down where the wind is lightest, and accelerating at intervals with bursts of rapid fluttering of the

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The Dungeness petrel – a response from the BBRC

The three letters from David Walker & Owen Leyshon, David Ferguson and Andrew Duff (above) all cover roughly the same ground, although each has a slightly different emphasis: what standards BBRC should expect for a rare-

question but the documentation is inadequate for full acceptance? If the BBRC really does believe that the observers saw a Herald Petrel – after all, what else could it have been? – then in a sense the record has been accepted. Are we not throwing the baby out with the bath water by assigning the record to the 'rejected' scrap heap? Moreover, the stigma of having 'rejected' attached to records submitted in good faith is not just demoralising, but has led a number of experienced birders to eschew the whole assessment process; then all we get is a poorer scientific record.

sort seen by a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* rather than a Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*. The date is also not surprising, since many rare petrels have been reported during the winter. They often turn out to be immatures, presumably caught out by bad weather during their post-juvenile dispersal. The presence of some pale marks within the upperwing-coverts (which I do not remember seeing in scores of specimens from the breeding grounds, but have seen in other petrels out at sea) implies that it may have been in the terminal stages of the post-juvenile moult, which tends to occur when the older birds are breeding. These marks are presumably due either to the retention of old, faded feathers, or to the exposure of pale feather-bases while new ones are growing. Such 'discrepancies' suggest to me a good description.

The comments on the taxonomy of the species are also questionable. While there has been discussion of the situation in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific, this still by no means covers all the closely related forms there, let alone those in the Atlantic.

bird description and whether circumstances have any relevance. All three letters also seek to explore the mindset of BBRC. David Walker & Owen Leyshon also ask what constitutes an expert. Bill Bourne looks at some technical

aspects of both the description and the article, and we are grateful for his comments.

Do the circumstances of the observation, and the length of time the bird was in view matter?

Well, yes, of course they matter. Walker & Leyshon say that two minutes is quite a long time to identify a bird, and for some species they are quite correct. But, for example, the Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* at Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, in August 1997, required three days and a series of photographs to clinch the identification, while both the Siberian Blue Robin *Luscinia cyane* (Suffolk, October 2000) and Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach* (Western Isles, November 2000) took over half an hour to sort out, including telephone discussions while watching the respective birds. The Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus grisens* at Rosehearty, Northeast Scotland, in September 1999, was misidentified for three days and then, when Dave Pullan correctly identified it, he took nearly four hours to check and recheck everything before confirming the identification.

What do all of these birds have in common? First, they were all 'firsts' for Britain; second, they were all seen extremely well, with the bird at close range in comfortable viewing conditions; third, all the observers were very familiar with the genus that they were observing (and in the case of both the Short-billed Dowitcher and the Lesser Sand Plover, with the species too); and, fourth, all the observers took a considerable time before they were sufficiently confident to confirm their identification. As Dave Pullan commented with regard to the dowitcher: 'Knowing the enormity of this identification... we set about putting together a watertight case before calling the news out... mid afternoon' (*Birding World* 12: 365). The dowitcher had been watched more or less continuously since 11.30 am. The fifth point is that all of these species are at least as easy to identify as Herald Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana*.

In the case of the Dungeness petrel, we have three observers with no experience of either the species being claimed, or the genus in question. They saw the bird for about two minutes at a range of some 200-400 m, from a car in a strong gale. One can argue about whether gales necessarily make cars move or not, or whether the petrel was 200 m or 400 m away, but what is incontrovertible is that in the other situations

described, the observers had closer, more prolonged and more comfortable views of the bird concerned. Nonetheless, those observers still thought that they needed to see the bird for anything between half an hour and several days to confirm the identification.

Walker & Leyshon make the comment: 'Many identifications are established with much briefer views than this, often instantaneously and without consciously thinking about it.' And, again, they are quite correct, but with extreme rarities most people are conscious that there is a difference between what they have identified as nearly 100% certain and what they are prepared to submit. Surely most of us have had birds that we have let go because they have not been seen well enough. Most of us must have also had the experience of seeing something briefly and being pretty sure of the identification, but finding that we were wrong when the bird gives itself up later. It is not just about birds new to Britain. Because of the records we see coming through BBRC, we know how cautious most people are with rarities. Yes, if the views are good enough, you can identify some rare birds in less than a couple of minutes but many take much longer, and many of these are more familiar to us, and easier to identify, than Herald Petrel.

Is there some sort of BBRC conspiracy over rare seabirds?

This leads us into the question of seawatching records in general. This was covered fully, both by the Dungeness petrel article and the most recent 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain' (*Brit. Birds* 94: 452-453). There is no conspiracy, and it is possible to identify rare seabirds accurately, but the scope for error is high because there is rarely a chance to double-check features. It is sufficient to say here that we feel the same standard should apply to seabird records as to any other record. We are aware that this may be seen as being too harsh, but should we really expect lower standards? Indeed, you could argue that since birds on seawatches are frequently seen at comparatively long range, with poor views and little chance of a second look, we should expect a *higher* standard, particularly if the observers have no experience of either the species or the genus claimed. Nevertheless, we do value records such as this, and try to treat them sympathetically.

Should field notes be the only thing we should consider?

David Ferguson feels that brief views, poor weather conditions and the experience of the observers should have no influence on the assessment, which should be based on the field notes alone. BBRC believes that this represents an unrealistic point of view. If required (and I hasten to add that I am certainly not implying that this occurred with the Dungeness petrel), any member of BBRC could write out now a really good set of field notes for many rare birds, without ever having seen the bird! We need to consider much more than just the 'face value' of the field notes. In the same way, we do have to consider previous experience. At its simplest level, there is the question of poor identification from beginners, but when dealing with experienced and well-established birders we need to know their experience of the species and genera under consideration. For example, subtle shape and jizz differences may be very helpful in separating certain *Phylloscopus* warblers, but would anyone put any weight on these if they were being interpreted by an American birder with no personal experience of the genus? Why should it be different for British birders?

Surely the enormity of the record should have no bearing?

David Ferguson also feels that the enormity of the record is irrelevant. Once again, this argument is unsustainable. Most birders can identify familiar birds from a brief view or a half-heard call. We will cheerfully identify a Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* from a moving car, or a Blackbird *Turdus merula* which calls as we flush a half-seen shape from a bush. If we were in Newfoundland and approached the AOU with such claims, they would be politely but firmly rejected. The enormity of a 'first for Britain' has a profound effect, not only on the assessment process but also on the rigour of the identification process.

Is the mindset of BBRC warped?

This leads us to the question of the mindset of BBRC. It is not true that we seek to find something wrong with records so that we can reject them. Nor is it true that we are reluctant to accept records of extreme rarities unless they have been seen and photographed by large groups of individuals. The annual rarities

report will show that not all such birds have 'et al.' alongside the observers' names. Any decrease in the proportion of rare birds seen by only small numbers of observers is surely related to the easy accessibility of both bird news and the birds themselves compared with 20 or 30 years ago. We do, however, feel that there is a burden of proof on observers who have found an extreme rarity which is not seen subsequently by others, and this is more likely to happen on seawatches. We are aware that some claimed sightings of extremely rare seabirds are not being sent to us, but many of them *are*, and progressively more records are being supported by the sort of documentation which most other countries that deal with seabird records consider to be a minimum requirement. We also believe that a record as well documented as this need not be lost for ever. Should subsequent events prove that Herald Petrels are occurring in British waters at this time of year, we would be happy to reassess this record, as we have done with the original 'soft-plumaged petrel' *Pterodroma madeira/feae/mollis* records.

What is an expert?

The question of what constitutes an expert, and also how BBRC uses experts, is interesting. Most British birders who have travelled abroad will have seen lots of Black Kites *Milvus migrans* but few would claim to be experts on the species, largely because most of us tend to ignore them once we have seen two or three on each trip. Oddly enough, you can become quite expert having studied relatively few individuals of a species. Personally, I think I learned more about Pine Buntings *Emberiza leucocephalos* from the bird at Big Waters, Northumberland, in February 1990 than from all the others I had seen in Siberia and Kazakhstan. This is particularly true if someone has become an expert at finding a particular species or group in Britain. Such observers seem to get tuned in to the way a bird looks and behaves in a British context, although they may be less familiar with the range of variation of that species, and the way it behaves in different conditions. In this case, our experts included a North American seabird expert, who has been instrumental in changing the perceived status of this species in North America and has experience of seeing Herald Petrel both from a boat and on a seawatch; and a British seabird enthusiast who had travelled to

North America on a number of occasions specifically to see the species and has probably as much relevant experience as any accessible birder in Britain.

In previous years, experts were asked whether or not a record was acceptable. This led to some major problems because some experts answered the question by considering the description as if the bird had been seen in its known range, while others addressed the question of whether it would be acceptable in a British context. We now use experts to provide us with factual information and answer specific questions. The questions sent to our petrel experts are detailed in the original article, and so are the responses. Neither expert was able to confirm that Herald Petrel could ever fly like this, and nor were members of BBRC with experience of other *Pterodroma* species. Both experts were able to confirm that the plumage described was within the range of Herald Petrel but showed nothing diagnostic of that species. They did not, however, think that the plumage was outside the range which could be shown by some other *Pterodroma* petrels which, as Bill Bourne points out, as a group can show extreme intra-specific variation.

What was missed?

Andrew Duff wonders whether a 'hypothetical' category would be useful. Although this is often quoted in American literature, the Americans do not actually have a hypothetical category on their list. Both BBRC and BOURC feel that the system we have where, if a change in status occurs, we are prepared to go back and reassess records which were previously not accepted provides a similar function. We stand by our comments that the observers did not see the

Colin Bradshaw, on behalf of BBRC
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bird well enough. In answer to the questions 'What did they miss?' and 'What else should they have seen?', we would say that they missed a chance to confirm all the things that they had already seen, they missed the chance to talk through some of the features only seen clearly by one observer to get confirmation from the others, and they missed the chance to see the bird in different light and different wind conditions. None of these was the fault of the observers but it is what we would want for 'such a magnificent record'.

What else could it have been?

Finally, both David Ferguson and Andrew Duff ask: what was it if it was not a Herald Petrel? Perhaps there is a basic misunderstanding of the role of BBRC here. When we decide that a record is unacceptable, it is rarely because we think that the observers have misidentified one bird as another. The role of BBRC is to decide whether the documentation provided supports the identification sufficiently to allow it to become part of the national record. We are aware that it is likely that many of the records we do not accept are, in fact, of the species claimed and that they do not make the grade 'because the circumstances of the observation precluded a more detailed description'. We do not believe that we are 'throwing the baby out with the bath water'. We are aware that we do not receive every reasonable record. Nonetheless, the perception that there are lots of dissatisfied people out there finding good birds and not reporting them to BBRC is simply inaccurate. The percentage of records not being submitted has remained about 5% for well over ten years and there is no evidence that the validity of the BBRC report is being reduced. We do not believe that we would improve the validity of that report if we allowed our standards to drop.

Does plate 164 really show the Slender-billed Curlew?

A number of readers have expressed doubts that plate 164 in Volume 95 of *British Birds* really does show the Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* at Druridge Bay, Northumberland. Given the importance of this record, we feel it is worth while to clarify this question. We thank various readers for bringing this to our attention and for allowing us an opportunity to set the record straight. Colin Bradshaw has commented

as follows:

'As the photographer of plate 164, I read correspondence posted on the *Surfbirds* website and sent to *British Birds* with interest. At first sight, the curlew in the centre of plate 164 does not look as obvious as the bird on plate 178, and I can appreciate that some readers may have wondered whether this image was correctly labelled. It does, however, show a small



Colin Bradshaw

274. Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* (centre foreground), with Eurasian Curlews *N. arquata*, Druridge Bay, Northumberland, May 1998.



Colin Bradshaw

275. Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* (centre), with Eurasian Curlews *N. arquata*, Druridge Bay, Northumberland, May 1998. The original plate 164.

curlew with almost unmarked wing-coverts and a short, very straight bill that curves only in its distal third. This would perhaps be expected in a recently fledged juvenile Eurasian Curlew *N. arquata* in late July but would be exceptional in May. Fortunately, I kept all 12 slides that I took of this individual from the North Hide at Druridge Bay on 6th May 1998. The sequence starts with the photograph shown here (plate 274), where it does look very like the bird in plate 178, showing obvious scapular/wing-covert contrast, small size, a short straight bill, and a bland facial pattern. The bird then progressively moves to the position seen in plate 164 (repeated here as plate 275). Several of the photographs, plus a description of the sequence, have been posted on the *Surfbirds* website at www.surfbirds.com

‘There is no doubt that plate 164 shows the

Slender-billed Curlew. This bird, the appearance of which varied a lot depending on light conditions, was really quite subtle and not as obvious as some video-stills have suggested. These accentuated the contrast and made several features, such as the pattern of the underparts and the contrast on the upperparts, more obvious than they were in the field.

‘I feel that this whole episode demonstrates the continuing validity of BBRC. For every record submitted, we spend a great deal of time considering all the evidence presented to us. All ten members then come to a corporate decision that, particularly in cases like this, is the result of a lot of thought and effort. There is a world of difference between such a rigorous process and an assessment based on a single photograph.’

Colin Bradshaw

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Unusual Brent Geese in Norfolk and Hampshire

I read with particular interest John Martin's discussion of two recently documented Brent Geese *Branta bernicla* in Britain which have shown some, but not all, of the features of the race *nigricans* ('Black Brant') (*Brit. Birds* 95: 129-136). As the original finder of the Hampshire bird, I am pleased to see that it has stimulated debate in a wider circle, and has helped clarify the difficulties of identifying individuals of this race.

I should like to clarify two points in JM's otherwise excellent article. First, I would like to point out that I first saw the Hampshire bird on 3rd February 1998 and observed it until 18th March of that year, as well as during each of the subsequent four winters, including 2001/02. Second, use of the descriptive term 'classic' when referring to the *nigricans* at Farlington Marshes, Hampshire, is JM's interpretation (in line with his previous definition of so-called 'classic individuals' to describe those birds which show all the characteristics of *nigricans*), and was not a term that I had used in my original descriptions and comparison of the two birds.

The main aim of this letter, however, is to provide an update on the appearance of the unusual Hampshire bird in the two winters since my submission to BBRC (which documented the bird only up to the end of the 1999/2000 winter), and to comment on the implications for rarity committees.

As JM observes, the feature which had caused the most discussion about the true identity and parentage of this individual was the relative tones of the body plumage, in particular the slightly paler mantle/scapulars, fore-flanks and belly, which all showed (to a greater or lesser degree) more contrast with the black 'neck sock' than would be shown by a normal *nigricans*. Detailed observations during the 1999/2000 winter, between 12th November and 13th March, also showed that this contrast became more obvious as the winter progressed, presumably as a result of plumage wear. The bird's return in the two winters since then has prompted further consideration of this issue, as it now has slightly darker body plumage showing little contrast with the black 'neck sock' and more with the white flank patches; in other words showing the intensity of plumage tones of a pure 'Black Brant'. Consequently, the plumage features that were critical in BBRC's decision not to accept it as *nigricans* (which I support) are much less clear. In partic-

ular, in winter 2001/02, its upperparts and lower breast/belly were slightly darker than previously, while the white neck collar was marginally bolder. Although it had looked darker, and thus more like *nigricans*, in the weeks following its late-autumn arrival in both 1999/00 and 2000/01, it retained relatively dark body plumage throughout the 2001/02 winter. Assuming that plumage wear during the winter is approximately equal in different years, the current darkness of the plumage is real. Furthermore, the fact that it has shown progressively darker upperparts, fore-flanks and belly at the beginning of each of the last three winters indicates that its plumage has become gradually darker, which must be attributable to annual moult. As such, I now consider all aspects of this individual's plumage to be within the documented variation of *nigricans* and thus indistinguishable from some currently acceptable 'Black Brants'. I have always been 100% confident that I have observed the same bird throughout this time (helped by the fact that it has been paired with the same dark-bellied Brent Goose in the last four years, and mostly frequents the same areas).

I suspect that, had the Hampshire bird first appeared in its present plumage, it may have been observed as just another 'Black Brant', and its purity may not have been questioned. The only clue left may have been its rather small size. At the time of my submission, in March 2000, I had never seen this bird with more than a few hundred individual *bernicla* in Langstone Harbour, and I described it as the smallest Brent Goose in the area. During winter 2001/02 it was rather more mobile and was recorded at other sites. Consequently, I was able to compare it directly with many more *bernicla* than I had been able to before. I concluded that, although the bird was obviously smaller than the majority of the *bernicla*, it was not quite the smallest adult. It is, nevertheless, a relatively small Brent Goose.

Furthermore, during the 2000/01 winter, two juveniles accompanied the Hampshire bird and its partner. Initially they looked very like typical *bernicla* juveniles, but as the winter progressed they developed quite obvious differences. They both had mottled flanks, but one had slightly darker upperparts, and developed much more white along the upper flanks. The neck collar on both was similar to that of a typical *bernicla* and did not meet across the front of the neck under the chin. Unfortunately, the family was last seen

on 18th January 2001, so further plumage development of the juveniles was not recorded.

In conclusion, I feel that the Hampshire bird poses a dilemma for the evaluation of claims of vagrant 'Black Brants'. How do you recognise a potential or likely intergrade such as this one, which originally shows intermediate plumage features but subsequently develops the full suite of plumage characteristics of *nigricans*? Clearly, any anomalies in the appearance of an individual bird should be carefully considered, but this may not be sufficient when most or all of

them have already been lost. If it looks like a 'Black Brant', can it safely be assumed that it is 100% pure?

I still consider that the Hampshire bird is most likely to be an intergrade between *bernicla* and *nigricans*, despite its current appearance. I also believe that the development of 'better' *nigricans* plumage features with age adds weight to my argument that it is an intergrade. These arguments are developed more fully on my website (<http://geocities.com/jasoncrookuk/brentgeese1.html>).

J. Crook

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Genetic relationships of large gulls

In his paper on the genetic relationships among Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus*, Yellow-legged Gulls *L. cachinnans* and Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus*, Martin Collinson makes the strange statement: 'This second model is analogous to the repopulation of Europe by Man after the Ice Ages' (Collinson 2001). This implies that (a) the Ice Ages have ended, and (b) that Man did not repopulate Europe until they had.

There is no evidence that the Ice Ages have ended and we will not know this for certain for many millennia. The warm period of the last 11,000 years is generally regarded as the latest in a long series of interglacials, the more recent ones at about 100,000-year intervals. Neanderthal Man arrived in Europe about 200,000 years ago, and modern Man arrived about 50,000 years ago (Wilson *et al.* 2000). This was about halfway between the previous interglacial and the most recent glacial period.

The 11,000-year post-glacial history of Britain suggests that that time period is marginal for the evolution of bird species. Whereas several species of birds in Britain have evolved distinct subspecies, particularly passerines in the Northern and Western Isles, there is at present only one recognised endemic species, the Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica*. There is pollen evidence for Scots Pines *Pinus sylvestris* (the habitat of the Scottish Crossbill) being established in southern Britain 10,500 years ago (Roberts 1998) and about 2,000 years later in Abernethy (Wilson *et al.* 2000).

Large gull species, which do not reach maturity for several years, are likely to evolve

more slowly than passerines, which produce a new generation each year. Since only one British passerine species has evolved in the last 11,000 years, it is not surprising that the large gulls show less evolutionary distinction.

The shallow Caspian Sea is unlikely to have been a stable refuge in glacial times. During glacial stages, the catchments of its main rivers would have been frozen, greatly reducing inflow, and hence it would have shrunk. Conversely, as the climate warmed towards an interglacial there would have been vast amounts of melt water causing it to expand. An alternative scenario (not addressed by Collinson) for large gull evolution was put forward by Fisher & Lockley (1954). They postulated an ancestral gull in an ice-free Beringia, which spread both eastwards and westwards round the pole as the ice sheets disappeared. When the two ends of the ring met, two non-interbreeding species – Herring Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gull – had formed. Another chain of yellow-legged gulls extended from the Atlantic islands, through the Mediterranean, the Black and Caspian Seas to Lake Baikal, with the two chains linking in central Siberia.

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News and comment

Compiled by Bob Scott and Adrian Pitches

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of *British Birds*

Demise of the Cockney Sparrow

The BTO has launched a £100,000 appeal to 'Save Our Sparrows'. If you had read that sentence 25 years ago, perhaps even ten years ago, you might have thought that this was the issue of *British Birds* scheduled to arrive on April 1st, not September 1st. The decline in formerly abundant farmland birds is now a familiar story, however, and the latest research findings confirm that urban birds are badly affected too. A BTO-led consortium of experts, commissioned by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, has confirmed that there are ten million fewer House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* in the UK than there were in 1972: in 2002 there were about seven million pairs of House Sparrows, while 30 years ago there were 12 million pairs.

The species has declined most in southeast England, with urban and suburban gardens showing the greatest slump in fortunes. But House Sparrows are actually *increasing* in Scotland and Wales. Air pollution, reduced food availability, home improvements and cats are all potential causes of the decline and the BTO's House Sparrow Appeal will fund a new survey.

The massive decline in London sparrows was underlined by a remarkable series of autumn bird counts in Kensington Gardens since the 1920s (see *Brit. Birds* 94: 507). Just four individuals have been recorded there this spring, despite many other species continuing to flourish in this and the other Royal Parks. Famous sites which have lost their House Sparrows completely include St James's Park, Buckingham Palace (where they used to breed in the gates) and Hyde Park.

Links: BTO (www.bto.org); DEFRA (www.defra.gov.uk); London Biodiversity Partnership (www.lbp.org.uk); London Wildlife Trust (www.wildlondon.org.uk).

But raptors soar

In stark contrast to the fortunes of farmland birds, populations of some of Britain's raptors have soared over the past 30 years. *BB* readers in the 1970s would have been astounded by the news that the Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* is now our commonest raptor (*Brit. Birds* 95: 377-383) and by the fact that Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* now breed in England. This year, the Ospreys nesting beside Bassenthwaite Lake, Cumbria, have reared two chicks. These are the only successful English Ospreys this year, following the failure of the pair at the Rutland Water reintro-

duction scheme. The Bassenthwaite birds had attracted 23,000 visitors to the Osprey watchpoint near Keswick by late July, with a further 40,000 watching live video footage of the nest at a nearby visitor centre. Interestingly, Ospreys attempted to breed in the Netherlands in 2002 for the first time.

Link: Lake District Osprey Project (www.ospreywatch.co.uk).



Bee-eaters nest in Blair's backyard

Not Downing Street, nor Chequers: the site of Britain's second breeding attempt by European Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster* for 50 years was in chilly County Durham, in the PM's Sedgefield constituency. The only time that European Bee-eaters had bred successfully in the UK was in 1955, in a sand quarry at Streat, East Sussex, when two pairs reared seven young. A previous attempt at Musselburgh, East Lothian, in 1920 was unsuccessful.

The pair that took up residence in a disused limestone quarry at Bishop Middleham attracted a steady stream of admirers which had to be managed by the site owners, Durham Wildlife Trust (DWT). Once courtship feeding and copulating had been observed, the RSPB joined forces with DWT to provide round-the-clock wardening. The clutch would have been a huge prize to egg-collectors and several of the usual suspects in northeast England made the trip to Bishop Middleham, but only to admire the birds from a safe distance.

On July 24th, news broke that the bee-eaters were carrying food to their nest hole in the quarry wall, and the birds became instant media celebrities. In the first two weeks after the eggs hatched there were 8,500 visitors to the site, where a farmer's field overlooking the adults' favoured feeding area had been opened to the public. RSPB's David Hirst is trying to trace people who saw the Sussex birds in 1955. Former N&C colleague Wendy Dickson is one member of that select band. If you saw them too, e-mail David (david.hirst@rspb.org.uk) or call him on 0191 212 0353. European Bee eaters normally nest no farther north than Paris, but this year there have also been nesting pairs in the Netherlands and Belgium.

Link: RSPB (www.rspb.org.uk).

Yorkshire Birding ten years on

Now entering its eleventh year, *Yorkshire Birding* has adopted the mantle of Yorkshire's foremost topical journal for those interested in the county's birds. With a friendly, witty and at times controversial approach, it is always a delight to browse through this publication which covers England's largest and, arguably, most exciting county (Norfolk take note!).

Still edited by the same team who got it off the ground in 1991, *Yorkshire Birding* carries regular features, including a seasonal summary, Yorkshire birder profile, RSPB news, local gossip and 'a Yorkshire Birder's Diary'. The excitement of discovering the Scarborough Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* in March 2002, described in enviable detail by Dave Bywater, is followed by Mick Turton's review and summary of all past Yorkshire records of this delightful gull, including Britain's first in 1846. The declining fortunes of the Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* in the Yorkshire Dales, mirrored elsewhere throughout the country; and finding Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans* in Yorkshire complete the current issue.

To experience this purely Yorkshire phenomenon, annual subscriptions are available, even to Lancastrians, for £10.00 from Yorkshire Birding, c/o 8 Wolfreton Villas, Anlaby, Hull HU10 6QS.

Breeding Bald Ibis discovered in Syria

Breeding Bald Ibises *Geronticus eremita* have been rediscovered in the Asian Western Palearctic, where they had been considered extinct. A colony of three pairs plus another adult was found in the desert-steppe of central Syria by a survey team from the Syrian Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform. The three pairs were incubating eggs. This is the first evidence of continued breeding in the Middle East since the colony at Birecik in eastern Turkey became extinct in 1989. Since then there have been sporadic sightings of Bald Ibises in Saudia Arabia and Eritrea, which suggested that a breeding population still existed somewhere in the region.

Reports of the birds from Bedouin nomads led the survey team to the birds this spring. Team leader Gianluca Serra said that, 'Discovering this bird was like finding the Arabian Phoenix risen from the ashes!' Before this discovery it was thought that the world population of this critically endangered species was just 220 birds, confined to two colonies in northwest Morocco.

Link: BirdLife International (www.birdlife.net).

Roseates are in the pink – thanks to patios

The colony of Roseate Terns *Sterna dougalli* nesting on Coquet Island, Northumberland expanded by a third this year, thanks to the provision of patios. Fifty-seven pairs of Roseates nested on the RSPB reserve, leased from the Duke of Northumberland, which represents about 90% of the UK breeding population; and between them the terns hatched 74 young.

The idea to lay a 'patio' in front of each nestbox used by Roseates came from the Irish colony on Rockabill Island, Co. Dublin. There are more than 600 pairs of Roseates on Rockabill and they are particularly partial to patios. Like Little Terns *Sterna albifrons*, Roseates prefer not to nest in the open, and are generally more successful when given nestboxes (Little Terns have a liking for plastic piping).

Dave Barrett, RSPB reserves manager in the north of England, admits that he is not sure why the patios have boosted productivity. It may be that the birds like a platform to act as a lookout point at the entrance to their nestbox. The idea will hopefully be copied on Inner Farne, the Roseate Tern's former Northumbrian stronghold, where only one pair nested this summer.

Link: Birdwatch Ireland Tern Conservation Project (www.birdwatchireland.ie/bwi/pages/projects/projects_terns.html).

Barbour Jack'et all in for Countryside Conservation

Leading outdoor clothing company Barbour are keen to put something back into the British countryside and have come up with a novel concept to help countryside conservation charities throughout the UK. They want anyone with any used wax-cotton jacket to donate it to conservation volunteers. Jackets for donation can be taken to Barbour outlets throughout the UK from September to November, and, after reconditioning, jackets will then be distributed to selected charities where they will be used to keep conservation volunteers warm and dry when working in the British countryside. Barbour will ensure that all jackets donated to the campaign are reconditioned by the comprehensive 'reproofing and repair service'. As an added incentive to encourage owners to part with their jackets, anyone donating an old jacket, in whatever condition, will be given a voucher worth £25 off the purchase price of a new one.

Barbour wax jackets, legendary for their durability and robust nature, are the ultimate recyclable product, which, with careful maintenance, will give many years of service. Contact Keeley Holmes on 0191 265 7765 or e-mail: Keeley@karolmarketing.com

Birders not so mean after all

A footnote to the story last month (*Brit. Birds* 95: 403) about tight-fisted twitchers failing to donate a few pounds to a worthy cause in Runswick Bay, North Yorkshire. A local lady, fundraising for a bus shelter for the village, welcomed many birders who had travelled to see a Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* in her garden, but they donated just £16.50 towards the new shelter. Shamed by their fellow birders' parsimony, people who did not even go and see the bird have sent money to the *BirdGuides* news service, and over £100 has now been raised.

Icelandic hydro scheme resurrected

Conservationists may have celebrated prematurely when Norsk Hydro abandoned plans for a giant aluminium smelter, powered by a huge hydroelectric scheme, in eastern Iceland (*Brit. Birds* 95: 317). As one aluminium company exits, another one enters: the American company Alcoa has now signed a memorandum of understanding with the Icelandic Government to co-operate on a 295,000-tonnes-per-year smelter to be fed by a 500-megawatt hydroelectric power plant.

The reservoir for the hydro scheme would drown 43 km² of

glacial fells in the principal Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus* nesting area. The World Wide Fund for Nature said it wanted Iceland to declare the eastern highlands a national park, because they would be irreversibly damaged by the dams and reservoirs dictated by the

multi-billion-dollar project. The region is Europe's second-largest wilderness (Svalbard being the largest). There is also, apparently, enough hydro and geothermal power near Reykjavik in the west to fuel any new smelter without touching the wilderness (there are already two aluminium smelters in the west of Iceland).

Barry Spence retires

After an innings lasting an unbeaten 37 years, Barry Spence retired as warden of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's reserve at Spurn Point on 19th July 2002. To commemorate this remarkable feat, over 100 guests attended a barbeque held in Barry's honour on 6th July, when he was presented with a pair of Leica binoculars. We wish Barry well for the future; doubtless he will remain a familiar figure along the peninsula.

Rarities Committee news

BBRC seeks new member

Grahame Walbridge, currently the longest-serving member of BBRC, is due to retire on 1st April 2003 having served three years more than his allotted time. No one from southwest Britain was proposed in 2000 so Grahame agreed, in the short term, to stay on for an additional period until he had completed some important extra tasks. He has been a member of BBRC since 1992, and, with his extensive knowledge of both birds and observers, has helped us enormously. We are now seeking a replacement with the usual attributes required for membership of BBRC. The prime qualifications of candidates are:

- a widely acknowledged expertise in identification
- proven reliability in the field
- a track record of high-quality submissions of descriptions of scarce and rare birds to county records committees and BBRC
- considerable experience of record assessment

- the capacity to work quickly and efficiently, and handle the considerable volume of work involved in assessing upwards of 1,000 records per year
- easy access to and knowledge of IT

With Doug Page on Scilly and John Martin in Bristol, we feel that we are now reasonably well represented in the southwest; accordingly, we do not feel that we need to replace Grahame with another birder from the southwest. The BBRC's nominee for this year is Chris Bradshaw (no relation to the current chairman) who has lived and birded in Kent for most of his life. He is in his early thirties and has travelled extensively in Europe, North America and Asia, and works as a bird-tour leader. He has been heavily involved in record assessment and survey work, both in Kent and the Middle East, and is currently chairman of the Ornithological Society of the Middle East Conservation and Research Com-

mittee. Despite all this, he maintains a healthy interest in sport, music and current affairs. In British birding terms, he is perhaps best known for his contribution to the understanding of Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* identification as a result of his observations of the bird in Kent at South Swale in 1994.

Other nominations, with a proposer and seconder, and the written agreement of the nominee, should be sent to the Chairman of the BBRC before 1st January 2003, after which date a voting slip and list of candidates with relevant details will be sent to all County Recorders and bird-observatory wardens.

For more information, telephone Colin Bradshaw on 0191 257 2389.



The British Birds Rarities Committee is sponsored by Carl Zeiss Ltd.

Chairman: Colin Bradshaw, 9 Tynemouth Place, Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear NE 30 1BJ
Secretary: IJ J. Rogers, 2 Churchtown Cottages, Towedack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AZ

Reviews

WHERE TO WATCH BIRDS: THAMES VALLEY & THE CHILTERNs

By Brian Clews and Paul Trodd. Third edition (previously published as *Where to Watch Birds in Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Oxfordshire*). Christopher Helm, A&C Black, London, 2002. 368 pages; 60 line drawings. ISBN 0-7136-5953-X. Paperback, £14.99.

Revised, revamped and given a shorter, more 'snappy' title (if with a little geographical licence), this 'Where to Watch' guide is neatly produced and crammed with useful detail for anyone visiting this somewhat under-rated area of England. Indeed, the five land-locked counties situated north and west of London, covering much of the Thames Valley and Chilterns, offer many rewarding, exciting, affordable and easy-to-reach sites to explore within a single day, for a catchment area which probably supports a greater density of people with a keen interest in birds than anywhere else in the world. They are surprisingly bird-rich too, with around 250 species noted each year, including some real avian gems, such as wintering Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* and Smew *Mergellus albellus*, regular transient Ring Ouzels *Turdus torquatus*, breeding Lady Amherst's Pheasants *Chrysolophus*



amherstiae, Hawfinches *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* and the rapidly increasing Red Kites *Milvus milvus*, with their nucleus in the Chilterns: often the species which initially tempts many 'outsiders' to explore this region.

Presented in standard 'Where to Watch' format, the guide describes 82 birdwatching sites in detail, with useful location maps (accurate, clear and generally uncluttered for all but a few known by the reviewer), plus a further 100 sites in brief (some 15 added since the previous edition). This third

edition also details 'clusters' of sites within easy access of specific holiday or population centres. Each site is assessed by habitat (generally sound – if often brief), species to be found (inevitably an over-optimistic catalogue for some major localities), a seasonal review, and access arrangements.

Fittingly, the guide's front cover is graced by an eye-catching Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* at the nest (the species first bred in Britain at Tring Reservoirs, Hertfordshire, in 1938). The text is enlivened with some 60 vignettes, by five artists; understandably of varying style and appeal, but often attractive and relevant. As with all 'Where to Watch' guides, this one treads a delicate path between encouraging birders to explore and enjoy established sites, and the dangers of excessive visitor numbers and disturbance, especially to sensitive breeding species. To the reviewer's relief, the authors seem to have achieved a happy balance. Buy a copy for the bookshelf, the car or the rucksack, and use it when visiting any of these five counties: each has much to offer.

David Glue

BIRDWATCHING IN MALLORCA

Filmed by Paul Doherty,
narrated by Bill Oddie.
Bird Images Video Guides,
Sherburn in Elmet, 2002.
Video; running time
62 minutes;
84 species covered. £17.95.

This latest video from the well-known Bird Images stable gives a basic background to birds and birding in Mallorca. This Spanish island remains a perfect introduction to Mediterranean birding, although access restrictions at many sites have somewhat reduced the appeal of Mallorca in the last

decade. The tape broadly follows a travelogue format, and there is almost as much footage of locations as of birds. Consequently, serious birders may not find too much of interest in this video. There is good material of some northern European rarities, such as Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora*, Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*, Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon*, and several *Sylvia* warbler species (with vocalisations), and of potential vagrants to the north, such as Thekla Lark *Galerida theklae* and the 'Mediterranean Shag' *Phalacrocorax aristotелиs desmarestii*. One of the primary attractions of a Mallorcan birding trip is the abundance of passage migrants, and there is

inadequate footage of these (for example, *Hippolais* and *Phylloscopus* warblers, Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* and Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* are all completely omitted). The discussion of the distinctive Balearic race of Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra balearica* does not mention the heavy bill, or how different the flight-call is from nominate birds.

This guide is clearly aimed at beginners and intermediate-level birders considering a first trip to Mallorca. If you are in this group, the video gives a feel for the place and its resident birds and, hopefully, it will help persuade you to visit this superb birding island.

Jon King



Monthly Marathon

There are probably few *BB* readers who did not immediately recognise the bird in photo number 188 (repeated here as plate 276) as a goose. Its apparent bulkiness quickly rules out any thoughts of a duck, while its short legs do not fit an ibis *Threskiornithidae*, which might otherwise look vaguely similar in shape. The fairly uniform, brownish-grey plumage helps us to eliminate the 'black' geese *Branta*, all of which show much more contrast in their plumage pattern. That leaves us with the 'grey' geese in the genus *Anser*. From a 'traditional' taxonomic viewpoint, there are five species which occur in the Western Palearctic (and indeed in Britain) to consider, though it has been proposed recently that Bean Goose *A. fabalis* be split and treated as two species. When considering grey geese on the ground at medium to close range (or in photographs), soft-part coloration and bill pattern are extremely useful starting points for identification. In this photograph of a preening bird, the bill is obscured but the legs are clearly orange, which rules out Pink-footed Goose *A. brachy-*



Richard Patient

276. Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus*, Japan, February 2001.

rhynchus and Greylag Goose *A. anser*. Of the three remaining candidates, both forms of Bean Goose can be eliminated by the black markings on the lower breast and belly. This leaves us with two closely related species: White-fronted Goose *A. albifrons* and Lesser White-fronted Goose *A. erythropus*. These two species can be difficult to tell apart, and before we proceed any further with the identification process, it might be wise to stop and consider the age of the bird. In both species the grooves in the feathering on the side of the neck (sometimes referred to as the 'water-combing' effect) are much more developed in adults. The

neck of our bird, although folded back, seems to show these grooves as being well developed. Another feature to check is the barring on the mantle and wing-coverts. In adults this is boldly marked and the lines are straight, while in juveniles it is fainter and more scalloped. Once again, the pattern of our bird fits an adult. So if we return to the black markings on the lower breast and belly, can we conclude anything from them having decided that the goose is an adult? The black markings on adult White-fronted Geese vary considerably, but they are normally much more heavily marked than on this bird. On Lesser White-fronts, the black markings are also variable, but are generally much smaller than those on White-fronted Geese. This adult Lesser White-fronted Goose was photographed in Japan in 2001 by Richard Patient.

The majority of contestants (84%) correctly identified the goose, which leaves us with Nils van Duivendijk and Diederik Kok out in front with a 100% record of four out of four in this round, and Paul French one step back with a sequence of three-in-a-row.

David Fisher



277. 'Monthly Marathon'. Photo no. 191. Seventh stage in twelfth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules (see page 36), then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, c/o The Banks, Mounfield, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JY, or by e-mail to editor@britishbirds.co.uk, to arrive by 31st October 2002.

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Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary of unchecked reports covers mid July to mid August 2002.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* Sumburgh (Shetland), 12th August. 'Soft-plumaged petrel' *Pterodroma madeiralfeae/mollis* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 28th July; Porthgwarra (Cornwall), 29th July. **Great Shearwater** *Puffinus gravis* Maximum counts in Ireland were of 345 off Galley Head (Co. Cork) and 255 off Cape Clear (Co. Cork), both on 14th August. **Wilson's Storm-petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* Four off Basket Islands (Co. Kerry), 6th August; five past Bridges of Ross (Co. Clare), 11th August with another on 12th; two off Porthgwarra, 13th August, then regularly seen on pelagics from Scilly, including at least six on 14th August; one past Kilcummin Head (Co. Mayo), 14th August.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* Found dead, Hoo Peninsula (Kent), 19th July. **Great White Egret** *Egretta alba* Oare Marshes (Kent), 24th July; two, Radipole Lake (Dorset), 27th-28th July; Porth Reservoir (Cornwall), 4th-14th August; Porthmadog area (Gwynedd), 8th-17th August; Sale Water Park (Greater Manchester), 12th August; Elmley (Kent), 12th-16th August; Cotswold Water Park (Gloucestershire), 18th August.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* Elmley (Kent), from at least 10th to 18th August. **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* Two, Horseshoe Point (Lincolnshire), 17th July, with at least one to 19th July; Selker Bay (Cumbria), 3rd August; South Uist (Western Isles), 3rd-4th August; Hengistbury Head (Dorset), 10th August. **Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis* Ballycotton (Co. Cork) 31st July. **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* Old Hall Marshes (Essex), 18th-21st July; St Mary's Island (Northumberland), 18th-21st July; Grove Ferry (Kent), 20th-21st July;

Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), 22nd July and 7th August; Titchwell (Norfolk), 23rd-28th July; Seaton Snook/Seal Sands (Cleveland), 8th-18th August; Blackrock Strand (Co. Kerry), 11th August; Filey (North Yorkshire), 15th August. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* Two, Cley (Norfolk), 3rd-7th August, with one remaining to 12th August. **Stilt Sandpiper** *Micropalama himantopus* Pennington Marshes (Hampshire), 21st July to 3rd August. **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* Near Leuchars (Fife), 1st-2nd August. **Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* Inner Marsh Farm (Cheshire), 21st-29th July; two, Elmley, 16th-19th August. **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* Penclacwydd (Carmarthen), 15th July; South Uist, 10th-11th August. **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* Grune Point (Cumbria), 29th July.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* Farmoor Reservoir (Oxfordshire), 17th-18th August. **Bonaparte's Gull** *Larus philadelphia* Ardmore Point (Co. Armagh), 3rd August. **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* Lincoln (Lincolnshire), 10th August.



Mike Malpass

278. Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus*, Pennington Marshes, Hampshire, July 2002.

Stewart/ICM/Birdwatch



279. Elegant Tern *Sterna elegans*. Black Rock Sands, Gwynedd, July 2002.

Elegant Tern *Sterna elegans* Dawlish Warren, 18th-21st July, probably same Broadsands (Devon), 19th July, and possibly same Porthmadog/Morfa Bychan area (Gwynedd), 23rd-26th July. **Sooty Tern** *Sterna fuscata* Bridges of Ross, 23rd July. **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* Greatham Creek (Cleveland), 3rd August; Loriston Lock (Northeast Scot-

land), 4th August; Quoile Pondage (Co. Down), 4th August; Holywell Pond (Northumberland), 8th-17th August; Welney (Norfolk), 9th-11th August.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* Pair at Bishop Middleham (Co. Durham) hatched young on 23rd July. **Red-rumped Swallow**

Hirundo daurica Thrybergh Country Park (South Yorkshire), 16th July; Shotwick (Flintshire), 9th August. **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* Fair Isle (Shetland), 10th-13th and 16th-18th August; Out Skerries (Shetland), 18th August. **Olivaceous Warbler** *Hippolais pallida* Sandwick (Shetland), 18th August. **Booted Warbler** *Hippolais caligata* Portland (Dorset), 15th-18th August. **Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis* Fair Isle, 19th-20th July, and 30th July (second individual). **Two-barred Crossbill** *Loxia leucoptera* Fair Isle, 2nd August, with four on 16th-17th August; North Ronaldsay, 13th August; two, Sumburgh Head (Shetland), 14th August. **Parrot Crossbill** *Loxia pytyopsittacus* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 2nd August.



280. Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*, Portland, Dorset, August 2002

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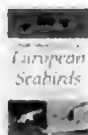


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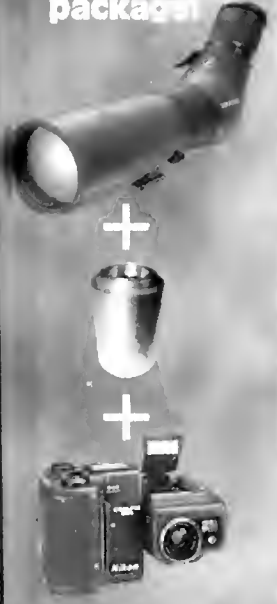
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Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2001

M. J. Rogers and the Rarities Committee
with comments by John McLoughlin and Jimmy Steele

This is the forty-fourth annual report of the British Birds Rarities Committee and it contains details of about 1,000 records which have been assessed by BBRC for the year 2001. The Committee wishes to thank the network of County Bird Recorders and Bird Observatory Wardens, with whom it worked closely to produce this report, containing most of the significant rarity records for 2001. About 5% of records of relevant species were either not submitted or arrived too late to be considered for this report. Of these, the most notable was perhaps the immature Ross's Goose *Anser rossii* in Norfolk during November-December. This has now been submitted and, like most other late records, will appear in a subsequent report. The fact that submission rates remain consistently high suggests that active birders still consider the work of BBRC to be vital.

The spring of 2001 was seriously marred by reduced access to the countryside owing to the restrictions imposed as a consequence of the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease. To some extent, this may account for the comparatively poor showing, by recent standards at least, of species such as Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*, Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* and Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*. Nonetheless, the report still provides details of some extraordinarily rare birds, including the first accepted records of Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*, Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* and Grey Catbird *Dimnetella carolinensis*, and the first two Siberian Blue Robins *Luscinia cyane* for Britain. Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* appears for the first time in a BBRC report and is also admitted to Category A, while there are also the third records of both Thick-billed Warbler *Acrocephalus aedon* and Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* and the fourth Green Heron *Butorides virescens*.

Perhaps the most controversial part of the report this year will be Appendix 1, which gives details of those species currently in Category D. These include Baikal Teal *Anas formosa*, Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus* and Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*. The BOURC has already explained the rationale for placing Booted Eagle in Category D (www.bou.org.uk). This decision was made in conjunction with the Irish and Northern Ireland Rarities Committees, with all three committees of the opinion that the date of first arrival in Ireland and the plumage at that time gave cause for reasonable doubt as to the origin of this bird. There are similar doubts about the origins of Hooded Mergansers in Britain. While an individual which turns up in autumn on the Outer Hebrides may seem to have good credentials, views of the bird in October/November 2000 were not close enough to establish the age with certainty and, partly because of this, the species stays in Category D. The subsequent appearance of an undoubted first-year bird at Newbiggin, Northumberland, in March 2002 may lead to a re-examination of the status of Hooded Merganser, but there is no doubt that this is still a very popular duck in collections. Baikal Teal is also currently in Category D on the basis of previous records, and, while the identification of the bird at Minsmere is not in doubt, BOURC does not automatically re-examine status with every new record of a species (otherwise the file on White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* and Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* would be in constant circulation). It seems likely, however, that BOURC will review the status of Baikal Teal as a result of this record. Although it is understandable that many birders will want a quick decision on this, accuracy in decision-making must take precedence. Perhaps, in order to avoid the understandable differences of opinion between listers and the BOURC,

people interested in their own British list might consider that species on Category D should be countable. The Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach* on South Uist, Outer Hebrides, in November 2000, is now being considered by BOURC, which is gathering information on the frequency of this species in bird-trade markets. BBRC is still assembling information relevant to the identification of both South Polar Skua *Catharacta maccormicki* and 'Wilson's Snipe' *Gallinago (gallinago) delicata* while, following our request for information, the file on 'Caspian Gull' *Larus cachinnans cachinnans* has completed its circulation of BBRC and is about to go to BOURC.

Following representation from the Irish Rare Birds Committee, we have followed the example of BOURC and separated records of birds in Ireland (the Republic and Northern Ireland) from those in Britain; Irish records are not included. For the first time in a BBRC report, the statistics of records for the post-1958 period contain only those seen in Britain. Time has not yet allowed the separation of earlier records but this process is underway. Some may see this decision as a mistake, and argue that Britain and Ireland form a coherent zoogeographical region. As the IRBC chairman points out, however, countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany maintain national totals when perhaps only a narrow river separates the countries and their respective lists. In addition, despite the many similarities between Britain and Ireland, there are significant differences too; for example, all woodpeckers (Picidae) are rarities in Ireland, and there are fewer accepted records of Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* than of Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*.

Over the past decade, the perceived importance of subspecies has grown in the minds of many keen birders. This has been fuelled not only by the availability of information on how to differentiate subspecies, but also by the possibility that taxonomic splitting will confer full species status on such forms. BBRC has always considered subspecies when the form involved is both a rarity and has clearly defined field characters, such as 'Siberian Stonechat' *Saxicola torquata maura* or 'Black Brant' *Branta bernicla nigricans*. This policy may, however, become unsustainable owing to the twin pressures of increasing claims of rare subspecies causing an impossible workload for BBRC members, and claims of subspecies which are not clearly diagnosable. We are often on less safe ground with

the identification of subspecies, compared with full species. John Martin has already shown how some observers were pushing the boundaries of 'Black Brant' identification into areas which BBRC felt were unsafe (*Brit Birds* 95: 129-136). Knowledge of diagnostic features of many subspecies is still evolving, and it is inevitable that many subspecies cannot yet be recognised with certainty. For example, we have received several autumn claims of Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* of the eastern form *samanisicus* but currently know of no features which can identify this form reliably in plumages other than adult male.

Changes in our assessment procedures, introduced in 2002 to help us deal more efficiently with the more frequent rarities on the BBRC list, may allow us to examine claims of a greater number of rare subspecies. We are currently in the process of determining which forms we consider diagnosable and would therefore allow assessment. This might prove to be a fairly extensive list and we will then have to decide whether or not to reduce further the number of species we consider, to allow us to spend more time on subspecies. Species which might cease to become rarities include, for example, Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*, Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*, Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*, Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* and Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*. Would the replacement of a number of such species (which are relatively easily identified in the field) with various subspecies (many of which can only be safely identified in the hand) diminish the apparent importance of the annual report to active field birders? We would be interested in hearing observers' views on the possibility that BBRC may no longer consider some of Britain's more frequent rarities so that we can look in more detail at subspecies, and look forward to healthy debate in the letters pages of *British Birds*.

Three species were removed from the BBRC list at the beginning of 2002 and, after the record invasion in 2002, the decision not to examine records of Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* seems particularly timely. We can, however, only create the time to deal with complex, high-profile records such as the Slender-billed Curlew (*Brit. Birds* 95: 279-299) by limiting our input into simpler records. In addition, we are aware that BBRC needs to embrace modern technology and

communications. Easy access to and familiarity with the use of IT is now a pre-requisite for candidature to BBRC. We now encourage submission of records by e-mail, including digital photographs, to our secretary at secretary.bbrc@dial.pipex.com (preferably with copies going to the relevant County Recorder), and we are particularly keen to develop the e-mail network between BBRC and County Recorders which is flourishing under the stewardship of Judith Smith. We are also keen to improve data transmission among members of BBRC, but this will require the funding of both broadband connections and relatively modern software and hardware for our members. BBRC will be exploring opportunities to identify other sources of funding to work alongside Carl Zeiss Ltd, to whom we are enormously grateful for their continued support, to improve the efficiency of the Committee's work. We would welcome ideas sent to chair.bbrc@dial.pipex.com on this matter.

BBRC would like to thank all County Recorders, Bird Observatory Wardens and their respective records committees, who help to make our job a great deal easier; Judith Smith for administrative help with BBRC communications; and Chris Kehoe for help in selecting photographs for the annual report. We should also like to thank Bill Clark, Jim Enticott, Dick Forsman, Kimball Garrett, Steve Howell, Al Jaramillo, Paul Lehman, Killian Mullarney, Dennis Paulsen, Ron Pittaway, Brian K. Schmidt, Lyndsey Smith, Paul Sweet, Keith Vinicombe, Steve Votier, Paul Walbridge and Peter Worthington for their help in assessing difficult records this year, and Keith Naylor for his assistance in respect of historical data. We are also extremely grateful to G. G. Buzzard and Peter Kennerley for extensive revision of the breeding and wintering ranges of the species included in this report.

Colin Bradshaw

Systematic list of accepted records

The principles and procedures followed in considering records were explained in the 1958 report (*Brit. Birds* 53: 155-158). The systematic list is set out in the same way as the 2000 report (94: 452-504). The following points show the basis on which the list has been compiled:

1. The details included for each record are (1) county; (2) locality; (3) number of birds if more than one, and age and sex if known (in the case of spring and summer records, however, the age is normally given only where the bird concerned was not in adult plumage); (4) if video-recorded, tape-recorded or photographed (and this evidence assessed by the Committee); (5) if trapped or found dead and where specimen is stored, if known; (6) date(s); and (7) observer(s), in alphabetical order.
2. In general, this report is confined to records which are regarded as certain, and 'probables' are not included. In the cases of the very similar American *Pluvialis dominica* and Pacific Golden Plovers *P. fulva*, Long-billed *Limnodromus scolopaceus* and Short-billed Dowitchers *L. griseus*, and Eastern *Phylloscopus orientalis* and Western Bonelli's Warblers *P. bonelli*, however, we publish indeterminate records, and this also applies to those of pratincoles *Glareola*, albatrosses *Diomedea* and frigatebirds *Fregata* (but see *Brit. Birds* 94: 395).
3. The sequence of species, English names and scientific nomenclature follow *The 'British*

Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic (1997).

4. The three numbers in parentheses after each species name refer specifically to the total number of individuals recorded (i) in Britain & Ireland to the end of 1957, (ii) in Britain only for the period since the formation of the Rarities Committee in 1958, but excluding (iii) those listed here for the current year. The decision as to how many individuals were involved is often difficult, but a consensus view is represented by 'possibly the same' (counted as different in the totals), 'probably the same' (counted as the same in the totals), or 'the same' when evidence is certain or overwhelming. An identical approach is applied to records of a particular species recurring at the same, or a nearby, locality after a lapse of time. In considering claims of more than one individual at the same or adjacent localities, the Committee requires firm evidence before more than one is accepted.
5. The breeding and wintering ranges are given in parentheses at the beginning of each species' comment.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* (18, 201, 2)
 Norfolk Titchwell, age uncertain, 14th January
 (P. Etherington, P. J. Milford).

Northumberland Farne Islands, adult, 16th
 November, photo. (T. Sykes *et al.*) (plate 281).

(In W Palearctic, rare and sporadic breeder
 along Arctic coasts of European Russia, E from
 Yamal peninsula and Novaya Zemlya. Also breeds
 in coastal regions of Siberia, N Alaska and Canada
 E to Mackenzie River and Baffin Island. Winters at
 sea, in E Atlantic, S to S Norway, but distribution
 poorly known.)



Robin Harvey

281. Adult White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii*,
 Farne Islands, Northumberland, November 2001.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* (0, 35, 1)

Cornwall/Devon Upper Tamar Lake, 8th January to 24th February (S. M. Christophers, B. M. Phillips
et al.).

(Breeds throughout North America from C Canada S through USA to C America, Caribbean and
 much of South America. N populations migratory, wintering S USA and Mexico.)

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* (2, 13, 2)

Kent Dungeness, age uncertain, 4th May (M. C. Buckland, G. Taylor, A. Wraithmell *et al.*).

At sea Sea area Rockall, MFV *Celnius*, 57°25'N 13°28'W, second calendar-year or younger, 3rd-4th
 August, photo. (D. O'Driscoll).

(Breeds on islands in S South Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Outside the breeding season, disperses N
 throughout southern oceans as far as Tropic of Capricorn.)

The Dungeness sighting proves that the eternal optimism of seawatchers reaps its rewards.

Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel *Pterodroma madeirae* (0, 20, 1)

At sea Sea area Sole, 49°49'N 06°11'W, about 12 km S of St Mary's, Scilly, 8th July, video., photo.
 (E. A. Fisher, R. L. Flood, N. Wheatley *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 221).

1999 Scilly About 1.5 km S of Bishop Rock, 24th August (R. L. Flood).

1999 Yorkshire, East Flamborough Head, 12th June (B. Richards).

(Madeira Petrel confined to central mountains of Madeira where breeding population is c. 20-30
 pairs; wintering range unknown. Cape Verde Petrel breeds in Madeira archipelago and Cape Verde
 Islands. Outside breeding season, disperses throughout N Atlantic.)

The Scilly bird was one of half a dozen reported in Britain during the year, but was the only record
 submitted prior to the publishing deadline. Some controversy still surrounds the at sea identification
 of this species pair, although the observers of the Scilly bird confidently identified it as *Pterodroma*
feae.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* (5, 56, 0)

2000 Cleveland Hartlepool, 15th July (M. N. Sidwell, R. C. Taylor).

(N Atlantic range restricted to warmer waters of Madeira, Canary Islands, Cape Verde Islands and
 possibly Azores. Outside the breeding season found at sea near breeding sites within N Atlantic. Other
 races breed S Atlantic and Indian Oceans to S Australia and New Zealand.)

This is arguably the most controversial species considered by the Committee. For some observers,
 the blank year in 2001 reflects the species' true status in British waters! A review of British records is
 probably long overdue.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* (4, 281, 18)

At sea Sea area Sole, 19.5 km SW of Bishop Rock, Scilly, 5th June (E. A. Fisher *et al.*); 10 km S of St
 Mary's, Scilly, 7th June, video. (E. A. Fisher *et al.*); 12-14 km S of St Mary's, 13th July, video., photo.
 (E. A. Fisher *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 222); 10 km S of St Mary's, 21st July, video. (E. A. Fisher *et al.*);

10 km S of St Mary's, 22nd July, video. (E. A. Fisher *et al.*); 11 km S of St Mary's, 23rd July (P. A. Stancliffe *et al.*); 10 km S of St Mary's, 29th July (E. A. Fisher *et al.*); 10-12 km S of St Mary's, 3rd August (E. A. Fisher *et al.*); 10 km S of St Mary's, 5th August (E. A. Fisher *et al.*); 12 km S of St Mary's, 5th August (R. L. Flood *et al.*); 12-14 km S of St Mary's, 10th August (N. Wheatley *et al.*); M. V. Scillonian, 49°09'N 06°45'W, two, 12th August (D. S. Flummi, J. F. Ryan *et al.*); 10 km S of St Mary's, 15th August, video., photo. (E. A. Fisher *et al.*); 12 km S of St Mary's, 16th August (R. L. Flood *et al.*); 10-13 km S of St Mary's, 20th August (R. L. Flood *et al.*); 11-13 km S of St Mary's, 20th August, photo. (R. L. Flood *et al.*); 16 km S of St Mary's, 2nd September (R. L. Flood *et al.*).

2000 At sea Sea area Lundy, 51°33'N 05°34'W, about 32 km SW of Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire, 7th August (D. C. Palmer *et al.*).

(Breeds on rocky coastlines and offshore islands of Antarctic. Migrates N to winter throughout southern oceans, N to C North Atlantic along E seaboard of North America to Newfoundland, Canada, and Bay of Biscay in W Europe.)

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* (0, 0, 1)

At sea Sea area Sole, sailing vessel *Marg a Rita*, 49°38'N 06°08'W, about 32 km SSE of Scilly, adult, 7th June, photo. (R. Barnes, P. Fraser, G. Legg, M. White) (plate 282).

(Rare breeder on Cape Verde Islands; has bred Azores and suspected Canary Islands; otherwise closest colonies in Caribbean and Red Seas. Pelagic outside breeding season in tropical Atlantic, N Indian and E Pacific Oceans, Caribbean and Red Seas.)

This species has been accepted on to Category A of the British List (see www.bou.org.uk). The discovery of this bird was well documented in the birding press, and amazing pictures were also published on the Internet soon after its discovery. This was a truly major find but was not, unfortunately, seen by any other birders! It, or another, was seen off Jaonneuse, Guernsey, on the 16th September 2001. For a full assessment of previous claims of Red-billed Tropicbird in Britain see *Brit. Birds* 87: 480-487.



Roger Barnes

282. Adult Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*, sea area Sole, about 32 km SSE of Scilly, June 2001.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (150, 190, 0)

2000 Northumberland St Mary's Island, Whitley Bay, F, 18th March (J. D. McElwee).

2000 Sussex, East Filsham, F, 29th May (K. M. Johnston, S. C. Richardson).

(Widespread, patchy and declining in Europe N to 53°N. To E, breeds to 60°N in Russia, and E to Kazakhstan. W Palearctic population migratory, wintering mainly in E Africa from Sudan and Ethiopia S. Other populations largely resident or dispersive in N Indian subcontinent, sub-Saharan Africa and Australia.)

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (165, 418, 5)

Cambridgeshire Nene Washes, age uncertain, 25th May (S. P. Dudley).

Cornwall Church Cove, Lizard, adult, 11th April (M. Tunmore). Goonhilly Downs, first-summer, 29th April (S. F. Elton).

Devon Stover Country Park, first-summer, 12th-13th April, dead, 15th, photo. (J. Avon, L. Whitehouse *et al.*).

Dorset Portland Bill, first-summer, 24th June (M. Cade *et al.*).

2000 Staffordshire Rolleston-on-Dove, first-summer, 31st March, photo. (P. Jones *et al.*).

(Local breeder in Morocco and throughout Mediterranean basin to Ukraine and Turkey. Occurs widely throughout France with regular breeding N to Belgium and occasionally Netherlands. Elsewhere, occurs throughout Indian subcontinent and SE Asia, N to Japan, locally within sub-Saharan Africa and widespread in North and South America.)

BBRC will not consider records of this species occurring after 1st January 2002 (see *Brit. Birds* 94: 290). A paper covering the identification pitfalls and assessment problems of this species has been published in *British Birds* (84: 145-148).

Green Heron *Butorides virescens* (1, 2, 1)

Lincolnshire Messingham Quarry, 24th September to 2nd October, photo. (A. Stanworth, A. Travis *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 316).

(Breeds SE Canada, throughout E USA and Mexico. N populations winter from S USA through C America to N South America.)

The first live Green Heron since 1982 arrived during an incredible spell of rarities, with species from all points of the compass entertaining the nation's twitchers.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (95, 46, 1)

Norfolk Bacton, Brograve Levels and Horsey Mere area, first-winter, 27th September to 10th December, photo. (P. J. Heath, A. J. Kane *et al.*).

(W Palearctic breeding population small and fragmented, centred on Mediterranean basin, from S Spain to Black Sea and E to Kazakhstan, with large population in Danube delta. W Palearctic population migratory, wintering in N tropical Africa. African population largely resident.)

Although the arrival date of the Norfolk bird is not unprecedented, the duration of its stay so late in the autumn is exceptional.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (2, 104, 7)

Dorset Middlebere, 29th-30th July (S. Smith, E. Thorpe). Radipole, 23rd-24th November, 7th-14th December (C. E. Richards, S. Taylor *et al.*); same, Portesham area, 28th November to 2nd December (N. Tomlinson *et al.*). Morden Bog, 30th December (E. D. Lloyd).

Greater London Wetland Centre, Barnes, 18th August (H. Bradshaw, S. Elliott *et al.*).

Hampshire Sowley Pond, 11th August; presumed same, Normandy Marsh, 15th-19th, photo. (M. P. Moody *et al.*).

Suffolk Dunwich and Blyth Estuary area, 26th August to 16th September (S. J. Catley, P. Dodds, J. H. Grant, D. Hatton *et al.*).

Sussex, West Greatham Bridge, 20th January to at least 11th March, photo. (E. Sears *et al.*).

2000 Lancashire & North Merseyside Marshside Marsh, 20th July (T. Baker, B. McCarthy, B. Woolley).

(In Europe, common and widespread in S Spain and Portugal with small, expanding populations in France and Italy. N populations disperse outside breeding season. Widespread resident throughout much of Africa, S and SE Asia N to S China and Japan, Australia, S USA, N and C South America.)

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* (0, 0, 1)

Argyll Balvicar, Seil Island, age uncertain, 5th-25th November, probably since 30th October, also in 2002, photo. (J. M. Dickson, W. Jackson *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 346; 95: plates 113, 283, 284); also in Ayrshire.

Ayrshire Ardrossan, 22nd-23rd December and in 2002 (per R. H. Hogg); same as Argyll. Steventon,

26th December to 2002 (per R. H. Hogg); same as above.

(Breeds throughout warm temperate USA, C and South America to S Chile and NE Argentina. Most N breeders migratory, wintering S to Gulf of Mexico, with some remaining on E coast N to New Jersey.)

The discovery of this long-awaited 'first' for Britain highlighted the increasing importance of the Internet as a tool in rare-bird identification. Many digital images of rarities are now displayed on various websites soon after they are found, thus enabling the rapid confirmation of identification, age, state of moult etc. Long gone are the days when one travelled overnight to Cornwall on a hunch!



283 & 284. Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*, Balvicar, Argyll, November 2001.



Great White Egret *Egretta alba* (10, 133, 8)

Borders Walkerburn, 28th October (D. J. & Mrs J. Methven, J. Simmonds).

Cleveland Teesmouth, 24th June to 12th October, photo. (P. Hindess *et al.*); presumed same as Lothian below.

Flintshire Flint Sands, 12th August to at least 5th November (A. G. Stamp).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Banks Marsh, 16th to at least 21st October, photo. (T. Baker *et al.*); same, Mere Sands Wood, 17th October (J. Hindle).

Lothian Tynninghame, 21st June (I. J. Andrews, V. Hughes *et al.*); also in Cleveland.

Sussex, East Arlington Reservoir, 16th August (J. & P. R. Cullen).

Sussex, West Sidlesham Ferry, 17th February (S. J. Patton).

Yorkshire, East Spurn, 31st October (P. J. Alker, A. J. Gramauskas *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North North Stainley, 12th-15th November, photo.; presumed same, dead, Neasham, Co. Durham, near Darlington, end November, specimen retained by local taxidermist (P. K. Bowman, J. R. Mather, C. Slater *et al.*).

2000 Greater London Kempton Park, 7th October (*Brit. Birds* 94: 458), locality was Kempton Park Nature Reserve, Surrey (per C. Lamsdell).

2000 Hampshire Farlington Marshes, 1st May (J. Crook *et al.*).

2000 Surrey See 2000 Greater London above.

(Small, but increasing breeding population in Netherlands. Elsewhere in Europe, highly fragmented breeding range from E Austria to Ukraine, but generally rare. W Palearctic population migratory, most wintering in N Africa and E Mediterranean, although recent trend to overwinter in C and NW Europe. Other populations breed across much of Africa, Asia, Australia and the Americas.)

With 45 pairs breeding at Oostvaardersplassen, the Netherlands, in 2002, and with nesting pairs now reported in France, we wonder how long it will be until this species is discovered breeding in Britain. Following the bumper year of 2000, however, the eight accepted records in 2001 constitute a more 'average' year. The rejection rate for this species remains high, and the number of flight-only claims seems to be increasing. Observers of a putative Great White Egret in flight need to convincingly eliminate the potential confusion risk of both Little Egret *E. garzetta* and aberrant egrets, such as the one at Stanpit, Dorset, in 1998 (*Birding World* 11: 318-320).

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (26, 115, 2)

Devon South Brent, 26th-30th August (Sister M. Bridget, S. Hopper *et al.*).

Scilly St Agnes and St Mary's, 27th August (D. Page *et al.*).

(Breeds from C Iberia and E France through C Europe to Russia, and in small numbers in N Greece and Turkey. To E, breeds widely in small numbers in forested temperate regions of Russia and Siberia to Russian Far East. Most are migratory, wintering in Africa, S and SE Asia; Iberian population is resident, with another resident population in S Africa.)

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (many, 70, 1)

Kent Dungeness, 24th-25th October, photo. (S. Busuttil, G. Lyons *et al.*).

1996 Norfolk Tallents Meadow Lake, 23rd May (J. Dove *et al.*).

(European breeding range centred N and W of Black Sea in Ukraine and Romania, with small, declining population in Balkans. Occasionally breeds France and Spain. To E, breeds from Volga River to Kazakhstan. Palearctic population migratory, most wintering in E Africa, small numbers remaining within Mediterranean basin. Resident or dispersive populations occur in Africa, S Asia, Australia, E USA and the Caribbean.)

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*

North American and E Siberian race *B. b. nigricans* (1, 99, 21)

Essex Foulness, 18th February (E. Lewington, C. Lewis). Brightlingsea, 21st-25th February, video. (P. O'Toole *et al.*). Bathside Bay, Harwich, 31st March (C. S. Balchin, J. D. Rowland). Old Hall Marshes, 2nd-20th December, two, 9th, 19th (N. J. Ransdale, C. J. Tyas *et al.*); see also 2000 Essex below.

Hampshire Langstone Harbour and Farlington Marshes, 14th November to 1st December (J. Crook *et*

al.). Pennington and Keyhaven Marshes area, 25th November to 2002, photo. (R. B. Wynn *et al.*). Needs Ore area, 2nd to at least 31st December, photo. (M. J. W. Hay, P. D. Winter *et al.*). Beaulieu Estuary, 2nd December (P. D. Winter, R. B. Wynn *et al.*), present 1st-20th. Hurst Beach, 27th December to 2002, photo. (S. King, R. B. Wynn *et al.*).

Kent See 2000 Kent below.

Lincolnshire Holbeach Marsh, 7th January (A. H. J. Harrop).

Norfolk Burnham Deepdale, 11th-22nd January, photo. (A. I. Bloomfield, J. R. McCallum). Ousemouth, 13th January (P. M. Wilson); presumed same, 21st (A. D. Collins); presumed same, Lynn Point, 13th April (A. D. Collins). Wells Harbour, 26th March (M. A. Ward). Blakeney Harbour, 29th April to 13th May (A. M. Stoddart *et al.*). Cley, two, from December 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 460) to at least end January, photo., one to 10th March (per G. E. Dunmore).

Suffolk Trimley Marshes, 18th January (P. Beeson, N. Odin). Kingsfleet/Felixstowe Ferry, two, 18th January (W. J. Brame, J. & K. Garrod). Levington, 27th November to 25th January 2002, photo. (W. J. Brame *et al.*).

Sussex, West Selsey, 13th January (M. Jones, O. Mitchell); presumed same as Sidlesham, 2000 West Sussex below. Thorney Deeps, 17th January (C. B. Collins); presumed same as Selsey above. West Wittering, 28th January to at least 10th February (G. P. Green, P. M. Harris, E. D. Urquhart *et al.*); presumed returning individual of 17th-22nd January 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 460); presumed same, at least 15th December, photo. (J. Reaney, E. D. Urquhart). Apuldram, Chichester Harbour, 10th-11th February, 3rd March (O. Mitchell *et al.*). Pagham Harbour, 15th-16th November (B. F. Forbes *et al.*); probably same as Selsey and Sidlesham above.

Yorkshire, East Spurn, intermittently, 20th January to 23rd May, photo. (G. Featherstone *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 53).

1997 Kent High Halstow, 3rd-8th March, photo. (M. J. McKee); presumed same as Egypt and St Mary's Bays, 16th-23rd February (*Brit. Birds* 91: 464).

2000 Essex Old Hall Marshes, 29th November; presumed same, 28th February, 7th March 2001 (C. J. Tyas, D. Wood *et al.*). South Woodham Ferrers, 30th December to 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 460), not noted in 2001 (per H. Vaughan).

2000 Kent Shellness, 2nd-29th October; same, with another, near Whitstable, 4th November; both, Seasalter/Reculver area, to 2001, one or other to 3rd March (G. W. Allison *et al.*).

2000 Suffolk Falkenham Marshes, 8th, 26th December (*Brit. Birds* 94: 460), first named observer should be P. Dodds.

2000 Sussex, West Sidlesham Ferry, intermittently, 4th November to at least 27th December (I. J. J. Faichnie, S. J. Patton *et al.*); also in 2001 above.

(Expanding W in Arctic NE Siberia to Lena delta, where overlaps with nominate race. Majority breed in Arctic Alaska and E to Victoria Island, Canada. Migratory, wintering on Pacific coast of North America, S to Baja California. Formerly, large numbers wintered in N China, Korean peninsula and Japan, but now rare.)

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* (15, 47, 6)

Angus & Dundee Montrose Basin, 29th March to 8th April (G. M. Addison *et al.*).

Argyll Loch Gruinart, Islay, adult, 10th November (A. W. Reid); present since 27th October.

Dumfries & Galloway Caerlaverock, adult, 15th-17th February, photo. (A. W. Reid *et al.*).

Fife Powmill, adult, 27th January (D. E. Dickson *et al.*); also in Perth & Kinross.

Norfolk Egmere and West Barsham, since 27th December 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 460-461), last seen near Docking, 10th January (per G. E. Dunmore). Cantley, adult, at least 20th January (R. A. Frost, J. C. Harris *et al.*); same, Hickling, at least 29th January (A. J. Kane, S. Prowse *et al.*); same, Wickhampton Marshes, 11th February (P. R. Allard). Lynn Point, adult, 22nd March (A. D. Collins, D. Hennessey, D. Noble).

Perth & Kinross Balgedie/Loch Leven, adult, 21st-23rd January (A. Whewell *et al.*); same, Powmill area, 26th to end of April (I. Munro, A. W. Reid, K. D. Shaw *et al.*); also in Fife above.

2000 Norfolk Thetford, adult, 27th-30th November, photo. (S. Holloway, A. Musgrove *et al.*).

2000 Suffolk Waldringfield, first-winter, 4th January (W. J. Brame); present 3rd-18th.

(Breeds Taimyr peninsula, Siberia. Migrates SW to winter in coastal regions of W Black Sea in

Romania and Bulgaria. Small numbers regularly winter in Netherlands, Greece and Turkey. Some may still use former wintering areas along Caspian Sea.)

One seen at various localities in north Norfolk between August and the end of the year was generally considered to be of captive or feral origin. As with other records of wildfowl in this report, acceptance of a bird's identification does not necessarily mean that it is wild. Birds which are obviously of captive origin are excluded from the statistics but others are generally given the benefit of the doubt.

American Wigeon *Anas americana* (22, 321, 14)

Argyll Loch A'Phuill, Tiree, F, 3rd-9th October (S. Bearhop, J. Bowler, S. C. Votier). Crinan, F, at least 5th October (S. Bearhop, S. C. Votier); presumed same as 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 461).

Cheshire Frodsham, F, 20th-21st February (F. Duff *et al.*).

Cornwall Hayle, F, 22nd November to 2002 (L. P. Williams *et al.*); presumed same as 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 461).

Leicestershire Eyebrook Reservoir, F, 12th November intermittently to January 2002, photo. (J. Wright *et al.*); also in Northamptonshire (fig. 1).

Moray & Nairn Lossie Estuary, F, since 11th November 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 461) to 3rd March, again, 19th November (per M. J. H. Cook). Loch Flemington, F, 5th to at least 30th March (R. Proctor *et al.*).

Loch Oire, F, 27th October to 22nd November (M. J. H. Cook *et al.*).

Northamptonshire Blatherwyke Lake, F, 6th December intermittently to 2002 (G. Watola *et al.*); same as Leicestershire.

Northeast Scotland Loch of Strathbeg, F, 8th-26th March (J. Harrison *et al.*).

Northumberland Fenham Flats, F, 26th November to 17th January 2002 (M. P. Frankis, A. D. McLevy *et al.*); presumed returning individual first noted Elwick, 4th November 1998 (*Brit. Birds* 92: 563).

Orkney St Peter's Pool, Deerness, F, 2nd October to 26th November, video. (K. E. Hague). Sands of Evie, F, 14th November (E. J. Williams).

Outer Hebrides Hougharry, North Uist, F and C, 3rd-7th May (B. Rabbitts *et al.*).

Shetland Loch of Spiggie, F, 1st January to 24th April (P. M. Ellis, P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington *et al.*);

Loch of Gards/Loch of Hillwell, three FF, since 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 462) to at least 21st April; Loch of

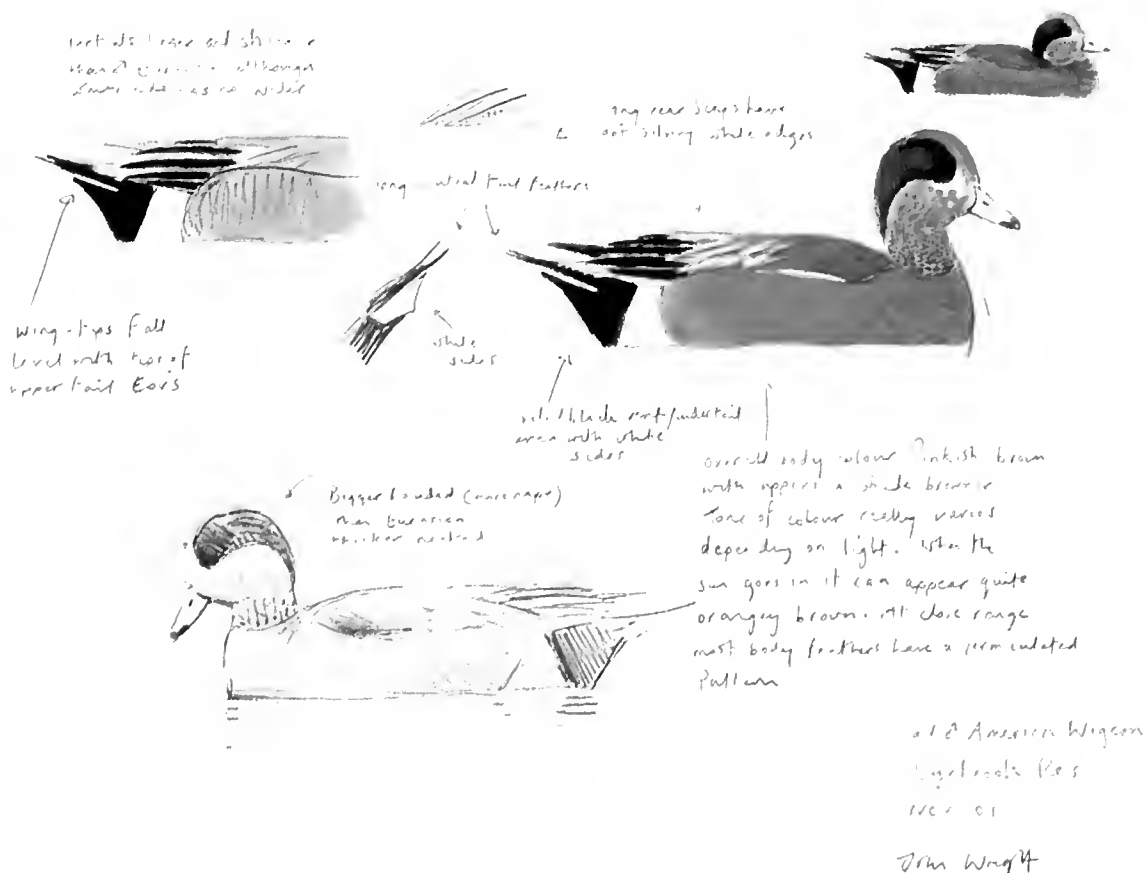


Fig. 1. Adult male American Wigeon *Anas americana*, Eyebrook Reservoir, Leicestershire, November 2001.

John Wright

Hillwell, F, 8th September to 2002 (P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington *et al.*), presumed one of above returning;
Loch of Gards, F, 25th October to 2002 (P. M. Ellis *et al.*), presumed one of above returning.
Suffolk Minsmere, F, 20th-21st September, photo. (D. Fairhurst *et al.*). Southwold, C, 22nd October
(W. J. Brame).

Yorkshire, North Nosterfield, F, 28th September to 3rd October, photo. (S. Warwick *et al.*).

2000 Dorset Butterstreet Cove, F, 26th-28th November (D. Croxon); presumed same, Abbotsbury, F,
5th December (S. A. Groves).

2000 Moray & Nairn Kingston, F, 24th September to 15th October (per M. J. H. Cook); presumed
same as Lossie Estuary, 11th November to 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 461).

2000 Orkney St Peter's Pool area, first-winter, F, 13th February to 8th April, video. (K. E. Hague).

(Breeds C Alaska E across cool temperate Canada to Hudson Bay and Quebec, and S into NW and
mid-west USA. Winters throughout USA and C America S to Colombia.)

BBRC will not consider records of this species occurring after 1st January 2002 (see *Brit. Birds* 94:
290). A paper covering the identification of this species, in particular the problems associated with
females and hybrids, will be published shortly in *British Birds*.

Black Duck *Anas rubripes* (1, 22, 2)

Argyll Loch A'Phuill, Tiree, F, 15th June (J. Bowler, A. J. Leitch).

Cornwall Colliford Reservoir, F, last noted 7th February 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 463), at least 18th
January, June to 21st July, 1st November; two hybrid FF, intermittently throughout year (S. M.
Christophers); see also 2000 Cornwall below. Loe Pool, F, 8th September to 9th October (S. F. Elton *et al.*);
presumed returning individual of 1st September 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 463); see also 2000 Cornwall
below. Stithians Reservoir, F, since 2000 (see 2000 Cornwall below), to at least 17th January.

Devon Slapton Ley, F, since 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 463), to at least July, photo. (A. S. C. Barker, P. M.
Mayer *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 111); same, West Charlton Marsh, 30th July to 24th August; same,
Slapton Ley, 26th September; same, Bowcombe Creek, 4th October to 2nd November, photo. (per
M. R. Langman) (plates 285 & 286).

Pembrokeshire Heathfield Gravel-pits, F, 20th, 28th January, 10th, 14th March (S. E. Berry,
M. Young-Powell).

1999 Cornwall Crowdy Reservoir, C or first-winter F, 24th-30th September (P. R. Aley, J. F.
Babbington *et al.*).

2000 Cornwall Colliford Reservoir, two hybrid FF, 4th November, one intermittently to 1st March
2001; one of same, Crowdy Reservoir, 14th November. Par Beach Pool, hybrid F, through 2000, 2001.
Stithians Reservoir, F, to end of year; same, Loe Pool, 1st September (*Brit. Birds* 94: 463); now not
regarded as same.

(Breeds E North America from Labrador S to North Carolina and W to Manitoba. Most are resi-
dent or dispersive but N breeders migrate to winter in coastal SE USA.)

The Committee appreciates the assistance received from County Recorders in assessing the
numbers of individuals involved in the influx of this species since 1998. Note the occurrence of at least
two male hybrids in Cornwall during 2000-01.



285 & 286. Black Duck *Anas rubripes*, Bowcombe Creek, Devon, October 2001.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* (19, 199, 4)

Dorset Stanpit Marsh, F, 13th-15th September, photo. (D. N. Smith *et al.*).

Essex Abberton Manor, Roman River Valley, F, 20th-26th May (D. Rhymes *et al.*).

Northamptonshire Earl's Barton Gravel-pits, F, 25th February to 1st March (A. F. Coles, I. Dobson, M. Wells *et al.*).

Suffolk Trimley Marshes, F, 7th-9th September (N. Odin *et al.*).

2000 Staffordshire Blithfield Reservoir, F, 6th August to 8th September (*Brit. Birds* 94: 463), to 14th (per G. J. Jones).

(Breeds from S Alaska, across much of temperate Canada to south-central USA. Migratory, wintering in S USA, Mexico, Caribbean and N South America.)

Canvasback *Aythya valisineria* (0, 4, 0)

Essex Abberton Reservoir, F, since 12th November 2000 to 13th February (*Brit. Birds* 94: 463).

Kent Dungeness, F, since 18th November 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 464) to 8th March.

(Breeds from C Alaska S through W Canada to NE California, and E to C USA. Winters from British Columbia to Great Lakes, and S throughout USA to C Mexico.)

Redhead *Aythya americana* (0, 1, 1)

Glamorgan Kenfig Pool, F, 7th November to 5th February 2002, photo. (D. C. Bolt, S. J. Moon *et al.*) (plate 287).

(Patchy breeding distribution in S Alaska and prairie provinces of W Canada and USA. Local breeder in NE USA but range expanding along NE seaboard. Winters in warmer regions of S USA, Mexico and Cuba.)

The first for Wales and only the second for Britain, following the first in Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire in 1996/97, which proved a popular bird during the winter months. It has been suggested that its appearance in Wales may have been linked with a hurricane which devastated parts of Cuba and the Caribbean. The bird's appearance changed quite dramatically depending on light conditions. In bright sunlight there seemed little difference in mantle colour between it and accompanying Pochards *A. ferina*, and identification largely relied on the blue-grey bill. In duller light, however, the darker back was much more obvious.



Mike Malpass

287. Redhead *Aythya americana*, Kenfig, Glamorgan, November 2001.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* (many, 252, 9)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, C, intermittently 19th May to 28th June, photo. (K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*); presumed same as 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 464).

Bedfordshire Elstow, C, at least 10th February to at least 7th March, photo.; presumed same, 7th November to at least 1st December (B. Squires *et al.*).

Berkshire Burghfield Gravel-pits, F, 2nd December to 22nd February 2002 (C. D. R. Heard, C. Lamsdell *et al.*); presumed same as 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 464).

Cambridgeshire Godmanchester Gravel-pits, F, 13th-22nd January (J. S. Clark *et al.*); presumed same as Fen Drayton Gravel-pits, 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 464). Ouse Washes, F, 15th January (S. Croft *et al.*).

Dorset Abbotsbury, first-winter C, 3rd-4th December (S. A. Groves *et al.*). Morden Park, F, 27th-30th December; presumed same as 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 464).

Essex Donyland Gravel-pit, Colchester, first-winter F, 9th January (R. Allen) (fig. 2). Netherhall Gravel-pit, F, 6th to at least 15th October (M. Dent, N. May, H. Vaughan *et al.*). Near Boreham, Chelmsford, F, 2nd, 9th December (D. Rhymes *et al.*).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Fairhaven Marine Lake, F, since 27th November 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 464), to 11th February, photo. (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 50); same, Leighton Moss, 18th September to 19th October; same, Fairhaven Marine Lake and Marton Mere, 20th October to 2002 (per S. J. White).

Lincolnshire Barton-on-Humber, F, 16th February to 18th April, photo. (G. P. Catley *et al.*).
 Norfolk Fritcham, F, 18th-20th June (S. H. Bryan, P. A. Jeffery, J. Lovett *et al.*).
 Somerset Ham Wall, C, since 14th November 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 464), to February (per B. D. Gibbs).
 Sussex, East Rye Harbour, first-winter F, since 26th November 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 464), to 27th
 January (per J. A. Hobson); presumed same, as adult, 1st-19th November (P. M. Troake *et al.*).
 Yorkshire, East Watton Nature Reserve, F, 27th January (M. G. Hodges, M. A. Underwood *et al.*).
 1999 Essex Lea Valley Country Park, C, 28th October to at least 14th November (*Brit. Birds* 93: 523),
 locality was Seventy Acres Pit, Cheshunt Gravel-pits (per A. Wilson).
 1999 Northamptonshire Blatherwyke Lake, first-winter F, 20th December to 27th February 2000
 (A. H. J. Harrop *et al.*).
 2000 Cambridgeshire Fen Drayton Gravel-pits, F, 23rd December to 1st January 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 94:
 464), observer was J. Oates.
 2000 Greater London Kempton Park, F, 22nd May (*Brit. Birds* 94: 464), locality was Kempton Park
 Reservoir Nature Reserve, Surrey (per C. Lamsdell).
 2000 Hampshire Allington Gravel-pits, F, 19th March to 1st April (*Brit. Birds* 94: 464), first noted 1st
 January (D. J. Unsworth *et al.* per J. M. Clark).
 2000 Northamptonshire See 1999 Northamptonshire above.
 2000 Surrey Hedgecourt Lake, C or first-winter, 15th-23rd January, photo. (K. E. Noble *et al.*).

(Main breeding range in temperate steppe-forest from Poland and Hungary E through Ukraine to
 Caspian Sea, but distribution often patchy. Other populations occur in S Spain, Kazakhstan, W Mon-
 golia and Tibetan Plateau. Migratory, most winter in E Mediterranean, Black and Caspian Seas, NE
 Africa and Indian subcontinent.)

It is interesting to note that there is a distinct winter bias to this species' occurrence in Britain, which sug-
 gests a genuine wild origin for most of the individuals involved. Ferruginous Duck is a partial migrant with
 many remaining to winter in Europe following dispersal from breeding areas in September and October.
 This is an endangered species and is given priority status under Annex 1 of the European Birds Directive.



Richard Allen

Fig. 2. First-winter male Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*, Donyland Gravel-pit, Essex, January 2001.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* (0, 44, 3)

Caithness St John's Pool, Brough, F, 23rd June, photo. (C. Jones, J. Smith).
 Cheshire Redes Mere, F, 13th-24th April, photo. (I. Blagden *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 144).
 Dorset Swineham Gravel-pits and Studland, first-winter F, 11th November to at least 31st December,
 photo. (S. Robson *et al.*).

(Breeds from C Alaska through Canada to Hudson Bay, and S to Washington and South Dakota.
 Isolated populations E of Great Lakes. Winters along both coastlines of USA, in E from New Jersey to
 Mexico, W Indies, and C America to N Colombia.)

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (62, 100, 2)

Cornwall Newquay, first-summer F, at least 10th May (S. M. Christophers *et al.*). Pentire Point, first-summer F, 20th-30th August, photo. (S. M. Christophers, J. Pearce *et al.*). Marazion, first-summer F, 19th September (C. C. Barnard, D. S. Flumm *et al.*); presumed same as Pentire Point.

Fife Tayport, F, 14th January to 7th February (per D. E. Dickson), presumed same as 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 466); same, Methil, 2nd December. Leven, C, 2nd February, 8th April, 3rd to at least 6th August (K. D. Shaw *et al.*); presumed same as 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 466); also in Lothian.

Lothian Aberlady, C, 1st-14th May, 15th June to 23rd July, photo. (per D. J. Kelly); presumed same as Fife. See also 1999 Lothian and 2000 Lothian below.

Moray & Nairn Kingston, F, at least 11th April (per M. J. H. Cook); presumed same as Spey Bay, 21st April to 20th May 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 466).

Northeast Scotland Ythan Estuary, F, 18th April (per R. A. Schofield); presumed same as 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 466).

Shetland Bluemull Sound/off Fetlar/off Belmont, Unst, second-winter F, 13th January to 23rd May (P. V. Harvey, M. Heubeck, I. Sandison *et al.*); presumed same as Sullom Voe, 14th November 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 466). Dales Voe, second-winter F, 27th January to at least 16th April (per K. Osborn); same as Rova Head, Lerwick, 2nd August to 16th September 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 466).

1999 **Lothian** Aberlady Bay, C, 21st April to 11th May (I. M. Thomson per I. J. Andrews); presumed same, 12th-21st June (C. Scott *et al.*); presumed same as 1998 (*Brit. Birds* 92: 567); also in Fife 1999.

2000 **Lothian** Aberlady Bay, C, 4th-17th May, 9th-11th July (I. M. Thomson); same, Musselburgh, 22nd June (D. Allen, B. A. Hickman per I. J. Andrews); presumed same as 1999 Lothian above; same as 2000 Fife (*Brit. Birds* 94: 466).

2000 **Shetland** Bluemull Sound/off Linga, Unst, first-year F, at least 29th March (B. Thomason *et al.*).

(Breeds from Kanin peninsula E across Arctic Siberia, including Novaya Zemlya and W Svalbard, Arctic Alaska, N Canada and N Greenland. European population winters along ice-free coasts of White Sea, N Norway and Iceland. Pacific population winters in Bering Sea.)

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

North American and E Siberian race *M. n. americana* (0, 6, 0)

Caernarfonshire Llanfairfechan and Penmaenmawr, F, 19th-20th, 28th January, 17th-31st December (per D. Barnes); presumed same as 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 466).

(Breeds on Siberian tundra from Yana River E to Alaska, and N Canada to Newfoundland. In N Atlantic, winters along coasts of E USA, N to South Carolina, and inland on Great Lakes. Elsewhere, winters in ice-free seas along both coasts of N Pacific Ocean, S to N Japan and California.)

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* (5, 294, 5)

Anglesey Llyn Lywenan, 20th April (D. Herringshaw, M. J. Pont).

Berkshire West Ilsley, 26th June (C. D. R. Heard).

Cornwall Nanjizal, 16th-17th December (M. D. Warren, K. A. Wilson); same as Scilly.

Norfolk Welney, 29th June (J. B. Kemp, C. Mitchell, D. Stevens).

Scilly St Agnes, St Mary's and Gugh, 15th December; again, 19th-20th (D. Page *et al.*); also in Cornwall.

Suffolk Sizewell, 8th May; same, Minsmere, 9th (L. Woods, J. Zantboer).

1975 **Shetland** Unst, 11th June (*Brit. Birds* 70: 447), now considered inadequately documented.

1999 **Kent** Dungeness, 21st May (W. Attridge *et al.*).

1999 **Orkney** North Ronaldsay, 14th May (P. A. Brown *et al.*).

1999 **Scilly** Tresco, 23rd April (W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

2000 **Sussex**, East Pebsham, 8th May (K. M. Johnston).

2000 **Wight**, Isle of Ventnor Down, 7th May (C. Dinsdale, J. Morris, D. Swensson *et al.*).

(Breeds throughout continental Europe except maritime NW Europe and Scandinavia, with most in Spain, France and Germany, and smaller populations elsewhere. To E, breeds European Russia to Kazakhstan and C Siberia. Nominate race winters Africa and NW Indian subcontinent. Other races resident or dispersive in sub-Saharan Africa, Indian subcontinent, E and SE Asia and Australia.)

The very late migrant on St Agnes, and later elsewhere, was unprecedented and provided the island's postman with an early Christmas box! Of those reports submitted for 2001, approximately 70% of Black Kite records were not accepted, and poorly seen individuals and incomplete descriptions continue to cause assessment headaches for the Committee.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (3, 7, 1)

Shetland Brow Marsh, juvenile, 8th-15th September, photo. (P. V. Harvey, B. Marshall, R. Riddington *et al.*).

(Fragmented range on steppe grasslands from Ukraine E through Russia to 100°E and S to Kazakhstan. Occasionally breeds to W of main breeding range in Europe. Migratory, wintering throughout much of E and C Africa and the Indian subcontinent.)

Another speciality of the Northern Isles; a long-staying individual on the mainland would be well received!

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* (100, 614, 12)

Cambridgeshire Wicken Fen, C, 21st-23rd May, photo. (J. Oates *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 177).

Cornwall Goonhilly Downs, first-summer C, 3rd-9th June (S. F. Elton *et al.*). Predannack, juvenile, 8th October (A. & C. D. Abrams, S. Pilbeam *et al.*).

Essex Stansted Airport Lagoons, F, 27th May (S. Patmore).



T. Sykes

288. Juvenile Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, Farne Islands, Northumberland, September 2001.

Greater Manchester Horwich, C, age uncertain, 6th-7th July (K. Haydock, J. Mills *et al.*).

Kent St Margaret's Bay, first-summer F, 12th May (P. J. Chantler, N. Jarman *et al.*).

Norfolk Cley, first-summer C, 9th July (S. J. Aspinall, A. & J. G. Threadgold).

Northeast Scotland Forvie, F, 20th-23rd May, photo. (D. J. Wozencroft *et al.*).

Northumberland Farne Islands, juvenile, 21st-22nd September, photo. (S. Davies, T. Sykes *et al.*) (plate 288).

Outer Hebrides Claddach Valley, North Uist, first-summer C, 24th June to 8th July (B. & A. Rabbitts *et al.*).

Worcestershire Westwood Pool, C, 15th May (A. Warr, S. M. Whitehouse).

Yorkshire, East Bempton, F, age uncertain, 22nd June, photo. (J. Horton, D. Mansell *et al.*).

2000 Kent Collard's Lake, C, 11th-14th May, two, 14th (M. P. Wilson *et al.*).

(Breeding range highly fragmented across wooded steppe of E Europe, from E Hungary to temperate Russia, E to Baikal region. Numbers breeding in Europe small and declining. Migratory, wintering in SW Africa.)

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* (many, 116, 1)

At sea Sea area Forties, oil installation *Elgin*, 57°00'N 01°50'E, C, 3rd-6th March when exhausted; died in care, Aberdeenshire, 6th, photo., specimen sent to Monks Wood Laboratories (S. Buchan, P. Doyle, M. Wood *et al.*).

1999 Orkney Moss of the Whitestanes, Hoy, dark phase, long dead, 15th May (E. J. Williams).

(Within Europe, most numerous in Iceland and Norway, with smaller populations breeding in N Sweden, Finland and Arctic Russia. To E, breeds across Arctic Siberia, and to W across Greenland, N Canada and Alaska. European birds mostly resident but high Arctic breeders from N Canada and Greenland migratory, occasionally wintering S to NW Europe.)

Little Crake *Porzana parva* (68, 31, 0)

2000 Caernarfonshire Conwy, juvenile, 27th September (I. Higginson *et al.*).

(Fragmented distribution across temperate steppe of W Palearctic, from Austria through Ukraine and European Russia to W Siberia and C Kazakhstan. Small numbers occasionally breed to N and W, reaching Netherlands, Finland and Spain. Most winter in NE and E Africa, although some occur W to Senegal.)

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* (many, 13, 2)

Kent Oare Marshes, in song, 26th June to 6th July, sound-recorded (C. D. Abrams, M. C. Buckland *et al.*).

Shetland Maywick, juvenile, caught exhausted, 18th October, released in good health, 19th, photo. (H. R. Harrop, D. Parham *et al.*).

(Locally common breeder from Spain E through Mediterranean basin to Ukraine, occasionally N to Netherlands. To E, breeds across warm temperate Asia to Japan. European breeders winter in sub-Saharan Africa; elsewhere, winters Indian subcontinent and from SE Asia to Singapore. Other races breed Australasia and southern Africa.)

The singing bird in Kent recalls a similar record in the same county in 1999.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (98, 193, 1)

Kent Dungeness, 9th-10th May (P. G. Akers *et al.*).

Norfolk Titchwell, since 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 468), throughout year, photo. (per G. E. Dunmore).

(Breeds along Atlantic coast of France and locally throughout Mediterranean basin to Black Sea. To E, breeds from S Siberia and C Asia to NW China. Most European birds winter in sub-Saharan Africa and, increasingly, in SW Iberia. Asian breeders winter across S and SE Asia and S China. Other races occur in Australasia, the Americas and Hawaii.)

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* (31, 53, 1)

Sussex, West Pagham Harbour, 26th-31st May (J. W. P. Bacon *et al.*).

1977 Lancashire & North Merseyside Marton Mere, 30th May to 1st June, photo. (J. P. Guest, H. Shorrock, E. Stirling *et al.*), previously accepted as Pratincole sp. only (*Brit. Birds* 72: 519).

(Breeds locally in Mediterranean basin from N Africa and S Iberia to Black Sea, most in S Spain, Portugal and Greece. To E, breeds across SW Asia to Pakistan and Kazakhstan but distribution highly fragmented. Winters sub-Saharan Africa. Other races resident in Africa.)

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* (5, 28, 2)

Anglesey Mona, 4th-20th July, photo. (K. G. Croft, S. Culley *et al.*). (*Brit. Birds* 94: plates 223, 252); possibly same as Gwent.

Gwent Goldcliff Pools, 25th June (J. A. Rowlands *et al.*); possibly same as Anglesey.

(European breeders confined to N Black Sea in Romania and Ukraine, where rare and declining. To E, breeds across steppes of S Russia to E Kazakhstan. Winters equatorial and S Africa.)

Collared/Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola pratincola/nordmanni* (36, 107, 4)

Cumbria Grune Point and Skinburness Marsh, 26th, 29th August (M. Sargent, D. G. H. West).

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* (6, 210, 13)

Argyll Sandaig, Tiree, juvenile, 4th-9th October (S. Bearhop, J. Bowler, S. C. Votier *et al.*).

Cambridgeshire Swaffham Prior Fen, age uncertain, 5th-8th October; another, 6th-18th, photo. (O. Kelly, J. Oates *et al.*).

Cornwall The Lizard, juvenile, 18th September to 1st October, video. (A. R. Pay). Men-an-Tol, juvenile/first-winter, 24th-27th October, photo. (A. Crutchley, G. Riley *et al.*). Crowdy Reservoir, juvenile, 1st November (S. M. Christophers).

Lothian Musselburgh, juvenile, 8th October to 2nd November, photo. (C. N. Davison, K. Gillon *et al.*).

Northamptonshire Earl's Barton Gravel-pits, age uncertain, 11th-16th May, video. (M. R. Alibone,

R. W. Bullock, G. Pullan *et al.*).

Nottinghamshire Gringley Carr, juvenile, 27th October to about 7th November (J. Hepworth, S. Lindop *et al.*).

Orkney Holm, juvenile, 10th October, video. (K. E. Hague). Grimness, South Ronaldsay, juvenile, 3rd November (T. Dean). Deerness, juvenile, 25th November to 11th December, video. (K. E. Hague *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides West Gerinish, South Uist, juvenile, 20th-23rd October (A. Stevenson *et al.*).

(Breeds on coastal tundra from extreme NE Siberia, E across N Alaska and Canada to Baffin Island. Migrates over W Atlantic to wintering grounds in S South America.)

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (3, 44, 1)

Outer Hebrides North Boisdale, South Uist, adult, 14th October to 4th November (W. A. K. Neill, B. Rabbitts, A. Stevenson *et al.*).

2000 Outer Hebrides Peninerine, South Uist, adult, 31st July, photo. (D. B. Jackson, B. Rabbitts, A. Stevenson *et al.*).

(Breeds across Siberian tundra from Yamal peninsula E to Chukotski peninsula, including New Siberian islands, and W Alaska. Although small numbers winter regularly in Kenya and Persian Gulf, main wintering range extends from Indian subcontinent to S China and Japan, S through SE Asia to Australia, New Zealand and islands in C Pacific.)

American/Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominical/fulva* (9, 277, 14)

2000 Kent Yantlet Creek, adult, 8th May (D. L. Davenport).

As from January 2002, BBRC no longer considers 'either/or' species records for some groups, such as this, except in cases where the identification criteria are uncertain or impossible to establish in field conditions (*Brit. Birds* 94: 395). For the sake of completeness, we will continue to publish any outstanding records from before this date.

Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius* (5, 35, 1)

Sussex, East Pett Level, first-winter, 1st October (K. R. Burch); present 30th September to at least 4th October, photo; presumed same, Pevensey Levels, 15th-23rd December, photo. (I. T. Barnard, A. D. & I. J. Whitcomb *et al.*) (plate 38).

(Breeds from Volga and Ural Rivers E across steppes of SE Russia and W Central Asia to E Kazakhstan; now rare and declining throughout much of range. Most migrate to winter in NE Africa, with smaller numbers to Pakistan and NW India.)

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* (2, 63, 3)

Glamorgan Ogmere Estuary, juvenile, 3rd-4th September (D. C. Bolt, S. J. Moon, P. D. Roberts *et al.*).

Shetland Uyeasound, Unst, adult, 16th June (S. C. Votier).

Sussex, East Rye, adult, 9th-11th July, photo. (S. Smith, P. M. Troake, D. Walker *et al.*); possibly same as 11th-29th August 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 470).

(Breeds on tundra of W Alaska, E across Arctic Canada to S Baffin Island and coastal Labrador. Has bred in extreme NE Siberia. Migrates across Great Plains and E seaboard of USA to winter in C America and shorelines of tropical South America to Brazil and Peru.)

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* (0, 5, 1)

Cambridgeshire Somersham Gravel-pits, adult, 21st-22nd September, photo. (J. Oates *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 317).

(Breeds on tundra of Arctic Siberia from E Taimyr peninsula E to Chukotski peninsula, S to Anadyr', and in extreme W Alaska. Winters in coastal regions of NE India and SE Asia, Australia and New Zealand.)

Only the sixth for Britain and one of the year's major surprises, given the location.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* (24, 317, 7)

Avon Severn Beach, adult, 4th August, photo. (J. P. Martin *et al.*).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Leighton Moss, adult, 29th August to 1st September, photo. (Mr & Mrs M. Anderson, R. Hobbs, J. Reddish *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 282).

Norfolk Cley, adult, 5th August (T. C. & G. E. Davies *et al.*). Cantley, adult, 4th-5th September (T. Lowe *et al.*).

Orkney Cata Sound, Sanday, juvenile, 3rd October (I. A. Dillon).

Outer Hebrides Near Balgarva, South Uist, adult, 3rd-16th August (B. Rabbitts, A. Stevenson).

Shetland Pool of Virkie, adult, 31st August to 6th September (P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington *et al.*).

1995 Norfolk Snettisham, adult, 31st July to 2nd August (B. Bland, I. Fisher, R. Q. Skeen *et al.*).

1999 Dorset Ferrybridge, adult, 26th July (M. Cade, C. E. Richards *et al.*).

2000 Cheshire Hoylake and Red Rocks, adult, 2nd September; another, 9th-11th (M. G. & J. E. Turner *et al.*).

(Breeds in N Alaska and Arctic Canada, from Mackenzie River E to S Baffin Island. Overflies W Atlantic to winter in S South America.)

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* (5, 155, 8)

Anglesey Alaw Estuary, juvenile, 25th August (K. G. Croft).

Avon Blagdon Lake, juvenile, 12th-23rd September, photo. (N. J. Voaden *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 318; 95: plate 289).

Cornwall Longrock Beach, Marazion, juvenile, 16th September to 7th October, photo. (P. A. Fraser *et al.*) (plate 290).

Devon Dawlish Warren, juvenile, 19th September to 7th October, photo. (L. Collins *et al.*).

Northeast Scotland Loch of Strathbeg, juvenile, 15th-26th September (R. Coleman, A. G. Knox *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Loch Paible, North Uist, juvenile, 16th-17th September (B. Rabbitts *et al.*); another, 21st-22nd (R. H. Hogg, B. Rabbitts, A. Stevenson *et al.*).

Shetland Foula, juvenile, 18th-21st September, photo. (M. A. Wilkinson *et al.*).

(Breeds extreme NE Siberia on Chukotski peninsula and Wrangel Island, E across N Alaska and Arctic Canada, to N Baffin Island and NW Greenland. Migrates through North American interior to winter in South American Andes, from S Ecuador to Tierra del Fuego.)

This represents an influx of juveniles comparable to those in 1998 and 1999. In 2001, however, unlike the previous influxes, only one juvenile Semipalmated *Calidris pusilla* and one juvenile White-rumped Sandpiper *C. fuscicollis* arrived with them, although over 30 juvenile Pectoral Sandpipers *C. melanotos* were found during September and the late autumn saw an influx of at least ten juvenile American Golden Plovers *Pluvialis dominica*.



Gary Bellingham

289. Juvenile Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*, Blagdon Lake, Avon, September 2001.



Steve Young/Birdwatch

290. Juvenile Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*, Marazion, Cornwall, October 2001.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (23, 174, 0)

1976 Shetland Whalsay, 3rd November (*Brit. Birds* 71: 501), now considered inadequately documented.

2000 Clyde Endrick Mouth, 17th May (J. Duncan, J. Graham, A. K. McNeil).

2000 Lincolnshire Read's Island/South Ferriby, 29th-31st May (G. P. Catley, N. Drinkall, C. Nimmick *et al.*).

(Nominate European race breeds in boreal forest bogs of N Norway, Sweden and Finland, and into Arctic Russia, where distribution uncertain. European birds migrate through E Mediterranean, Black and Caspian Seas to winter in Persian Gulf, W India and Sri Lanka, with small numbers in coastal E Africa. E race *L. f. sibirica* breeds from Taimyr peninsula to Kolyma River delta, and winters from Bay of Bengal through coastal SE Asia to Australia.)

The first blank year since 1971.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (180, 110, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, 29th May (H. E. Maggs *et al.*).

2000 Shetland Fair Isle, 22nd September, presumed same, 24th (*Brit. Birds* 94: 472), now presumed different (per D. N. Shaw).

(Scarce and local breeder in Norway and Sweden, which hold most of declining European population. Smaller and fragmented population breeds from Poland to Estonia. Also breeds E through European Russia, W and N Siberia to Yenisei River but population trends here unknown. Winters in sub-Saharan Africa.)

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (9, 156, 0)

Kent Oare Marshes, adult, 7th July to 5th September, photo. (per C. G. Bradshaw); presumed same as Elmley, 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 473).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Seaforth, first-winter, since 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 473), to 6th April; also 22nd April only (per S. J. White).

(Breeds primarily in Arctic Siberia where range is expanding W to Lena River delta. North American range restricted to coastal tundra of W and N Alaska, and E to Mackenzie River. Migrates through USA to winter from coastal S USA to N Central America.)

This is the first blank year for Long-billed Dowitcher in the BBRC report since 1972.

Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* (0, 1, 0)

1998 Northumberland Druridge Pools, first-summer, probably C, 4th-7th May, video., photo. (T. R. Cleeves *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 95: plates 164-165, 169-170, 178, 185-187).

(Formerly bred in W Siberia N of Omsk and migrated SW to winter throughout Mediterranean basin W to Morocco. Serious population decline during 20th century and no current breeding or wintering areas are known.)

The appearance of this diminutive curlew in a flock of Eurasian Curlews *N. arquata* was, for many, the highlight of their birding careers. Considered by BirdLife International to be a globally threatened species and critically endangered, this became the single most important record that BBRC has ever had to assess. Although dogged by controversy since its appearance, in-depth research by the Committee established new identification criteria, leaving no doubt that the identification as Slender-billed Curlew, albeit in poorly known first-summer plumage, was correct. That Slender-billed Curlew bred somewhere in 1997 is of major conservation significance, leading to hopes that the species may still exist somewhere. Details of this truly remarkable record can be found in *Brit. Birds* 95: 272-278 & 279-299.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (12, 101, 0)

2000 Yorkshire, North Filey Dams, 30th July (C. C. Thomas).

(Occasionally breeds in Finland and Baltic countries to Ukraine and W Russia. To E, breeds commonly across forest-steppe region of Siberia to Mongolia and NE China. Winters commonly throughout sub-Saharan Africa, especially E Africa, and Indian subcontinent E to S China and SE Asia; also Australia.)

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (35, 184, 6)

Carmarthenshire Laugharne, first-winter, since 12th November 2000 to at least 18th April (*Brit. Birds* 94: 474).

Cornwall Camel Estuary, adult, 9th-21st September (S. M. Christophers).

Devon Roadford Reservoir, juvenile, 16th-17th September, photo. (J. Tidball *et al.*); same as Cantley/Breydon, Norfolk.

Essex Manningtree, adult, 10th-11th October, photo. (C. S. Balchin, J. D. Rowland *et al.*); also in Suffolk.

Norfolk Welney, adult, 28th September (I. Barton, J. B. Kemp *et al.*). Cantley, juvenile/first-winter, 6th-9th October, photo. (J. R. Lansdell *et al.*); same, Breydon, 17th-21st (P. R. Allard *et al.*); same as Devon.

Pembrokeshire Fishguard, adult/first-winter, 13th December (M. Betts); same, Pembroke, 15th (T. Purcell, G. Thompson).

Suffolk Brantham, adult, 11th October (J. Zantboer *et al.*); same as Essex.

Yorkshire, East Tophill Low, juvenile/first-winter, 2nd-4th November, photo. (I. Forsyth, P. Izzard, F. X. Moffat *et al.*).

2000 Cornwall Hayle, age uncertain, at least 3rd October (L. P. Williams *et al.*).

(Breeds throughout much of subarctic Alaska and Canada, E to James Bay. Migrates through USA, where some overwinter, but majority winter from Caribbean and C America to Chile and Argentina.)

Photographic evidence confirmed that the sightings in Devon and Norfolk referred to the same individual, which showed a distinctive pattern of moult of the upperparts.

Terek Sandpiper

Xenus cinereus (3, 54, 2)

Norfolk Snettisham, adult, 21st July to at least 9th August, probably since 18th July, photo. (J. Scott *et al.*).

Northumberland Long Nanny Burn, High Newton, adult, 24th-25th June, photo. (R. Craig, I. Fisher, S. Sexton *et al.*) (plate 291).

(European range restricted to small population in N Gulf of Bothnia, Finland, and Belarus. To E, breeds widely but locally throughout N Russia to E Siberia. Winters widely along coasts of S and E Africa to Persian Gulf, Indian subcontinent, SE Asia and Australasia.)



Mike Richardson

291. Adult Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* with Great Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, Long Nanny Burn, Northumberland, June 2001.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* (6, 114, 2)

Essex Hanningfield Reservoir, first-winter, 30th December, photo. (J. T. Smith *et al.*) (plate 292, page 496).

Northumberland Stag Rock, near Bamburgh, adult, 24th August (T. Mitcham).

(Breeds over much of North America from W Alaska to Newfoundland and S to California, Texas and North Carolina. Some winter in coastal USA to S of breeding range but most winter in C America, Caribbean and N South America, S to N Argentina and Chile.)

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* (1, 205, 2)

Cleveland Coatham Marsh, first-winter, 27th-29th September, photo. (J. Birch, R. Caygell *et al.*).

Essex Old Hall Marshes, C, 18th-19th May (B. Churches *et al.*); presumed same, 23rd July to 18th August, photo. (T. J. Mendham *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 284).

(Breeds interior W Canada S to California, and throughout mid-west USA; also S Ontario, where population is increasing. Most migrate through interior USA and winter in South America, from Peru S to Argentina and Chile.)



292. First-winter Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*, Hanningfield Reservoir, Essex, December 2001.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* (2, 89, 3)

Bedfordshire Stewartby Lake, first-winter, 27th January to 4th February, photo. (K. B. Shepherd *et al.*); also in Wiltshire.

Outer Hebrides Eoligarry, Barra, first-summer/second-winter, 22nd, 29th September, 8th October (R. H. Hogg, A. Stevenson, R. Vernon *et al.*). Ardivachar Point, South Uist, second-winter, 22nd October (A. Dawe, B. Rabbits).

Wiltshire Swindon, first-winter, 9th-13th January, photo. (M. G. Prior *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 52); also in Bedfordshire.

1999 Avon Bedminster, Bristol, adult, 28th June, 7th July (M. T. Elliott *et al.*).

(Locally common from Nova Scotia, S along E seaboard of USA to Florida and Gulf coast, the Caribbean, and C America to N Venezuela. S populations largely resident but N breeders winter within S breeding range.)

A wandering first-winter appeared first in Wiltshire and, as so often happens with rare gulls, was relocated elsewhere, this time in Bedfordshire.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* (0, 40, 0)

Devon Tor Bay, first-winter, 19th-28th January; same, Broadsands Bay, February to 17th March; same, Hope's Nose and Teign Estuary, 31st March (per M. R. Langman); presumed same as Paignton, 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 477).

2000 Essex Southend, adult or second-winter, 29th December (T. Jones). See also 2000 Greater London below.

2000 Greater London Thamesmead, second-summer, 13th-16th April, photo. (G. Hewett *et al.*); also in Barking, Essex; presumed same as Avon, Dorset, Somerset 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 476-477).

(Breeds locally throughout interior provinces of temperate W Canada, E to Great Lakes and S to mid-west USA. Winters along Pacific coast of South America, from Guatemala to Chile.)

A bird first claimed as a Franklin's Gull at Boddington Reservoir, Northamptonshire, in March 2001 was later thought to be a hybrid Mediterranean *L. melanocephalus* × Common Gull *L. canus*. Study the photographs of another such individual at Rimac, Lincolnshire, in June 2002 on the Lincolnshire Bird Club website www.lincsbirdclub.co.uk

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* (11, 96, 6)

Cornwall Penzance, adult, 30th April (D. S. Flumm *et al.*).

Devon Exe Estuary and Bowling Green Marsh, first-summer, 19th-23rd May (D. Smallshire *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, adult, 10th June, photo. (A. Parker, D. Walker, A. S. Wraithmell *et al.*).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Rowley Lake, Burnley, adult, 25th October, photo. (R. Ashworth, P. Grice, A. Holmes *et al.*) (plate 293).

Outer Hebrides Ardivachar Point, South Uist, adult, 7th-9th May, photo. (B. Rabbitts, A. Stevenson *et al.*).

Somerset Hinkley Point, adult, 3rd February to 7th March, photo. (T. Maynard *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 65).

1999 Yorkshire, East Bridlington Bay, adult, 27th November (P. Piringier); rejected *Brit. Birds* 93: 566, now considered acceptable.

(Breeds widely across N North America from W and C Alaska through Canada to James Bay. Winters locally on ice-free rivers and lakes in N USA, and S along both coasts of USA to Mexico and Caribbean.)



M. Breaks

293. Adult Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia*, with Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*, Rowley Lake, Lancashire, October 2001.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

North American race *L. a. smithsonianus*, 'American Herring Gull' (0, 6, 0)

1998 Devon Plym Estuary, first-summer, 26th April (M. K. Ahmad).

(Breeds from S Alaska E across C and N Canada to S Baffin Island, Labrador, Newfoundland and NE coastal region of USA. Many resident, others winter S to S USA and Mexico.)

A number of other records remain under consideration. A set of criteria for assessment of this variable form is close to completion, which will hopefully speed up the process in future.

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (2, 72, 1)

Northeast Scotland Peterhead, adult, 4th March (P. A. A. Baxter, C. N. Gibbins *et al.*) (fig. 3, page 498).

(Locally common on tundra of NE Siberia, from Lena River E to at least Kolyma River. In Canada, rare and local in W Hudson Bay region, perhaps elsewhere. Siberian birds migrate E past Point Barrow, Alaska, in September to unknown wintering areas assumed to lie near edge of pack ice, perhaps in Bering Sea or N Pacific, S to N Japan.)

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* (76, 39, 3)

Angus & Dundee Montrose Basin, first-winter, 27th December to 4th January 2002 (D. Ackers, G. Christer *et al.*).

Caithness Castlehills, adult, 22nd-26th December, photo. (M. Ellwell, N. Money *et al.*) (plate 41).

Shetland Scalloway, first-winter, taken into care exhausted, 12th November, released in good health, Lerwick, 20th, present to 2nd December (L. Dalziel, J. D. Okill, K. Osborn *et al.*) (plate 13).

C. N. Gibbins

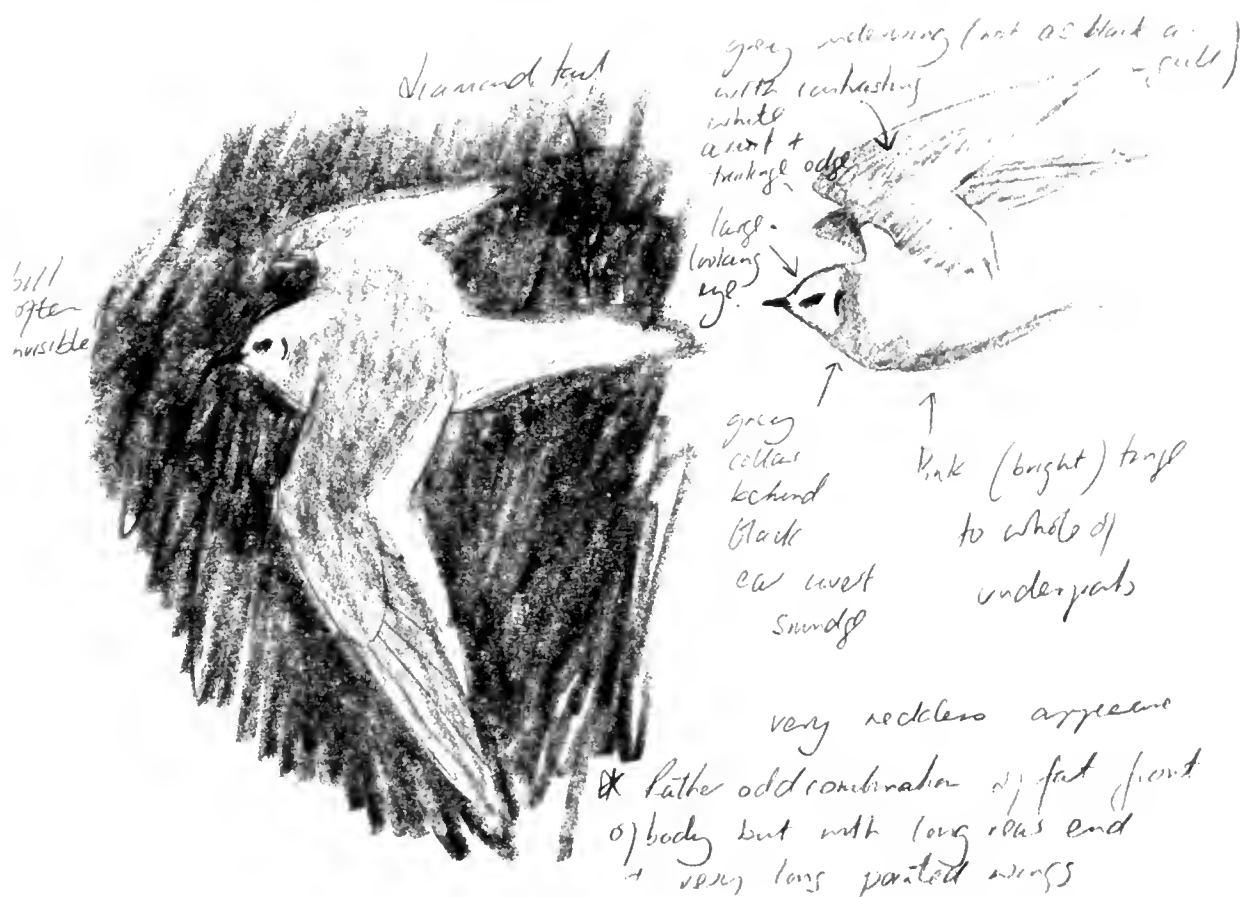


Fig. 3. Adult Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea*, Peterhead, Northeast Scotland, March 2001.

1983 Shetland Muckle Flugga, Unst, first-summer, 6th June (*Brit. Birds* 77: 535), now considered inadequately documented.

1999 Suffolk Aldeburgh and Southwold, first-winter, 5th-31st December (*Brit. Birds* 93: 537), correct first date 7th.

(In Europe, only breeds in Svalbard. Elsewhere, restricted to islands in the high Arctic between Franz Josef Land and Arctic Canada, with small numbers in N and SE Greenland. Wintering range poorly known, apparently within or close to edge of pack ice.)

Perhaps the event of the early winter was the influx of these three Ivory Gulls. Another three were discovered in February 2002.

Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica* (52, 214, 1)

Norfolk Titchwell, first-winter, 16th-27th November, photo. (R. Kimber *et al.*) (plates 14, 294).

2000 Kent Yantlet Creek, 5th May (D. L. Davenport, S. J. Gately).

(Small population in N Germany and Denmark. Widespread though local in Spain, but colonies are isolated and small elsewhere in S Europe. To E, breeds discontinuously from Turkey and SW Russia through Kazakhstan, Mongolia and NW China, with an isolated population in NE China. European population winters in coastal W Africa, S to Gulf of Guinea. Asian populations winter from Persian Gulf to Indian subcontinent and SE Asia. Other races occur in Australia and the Americas.)

A very late and popular individual in Norfolk gave many their first opportunity to study a bird in this plumage (transitional moult from juvenile to first-winter).

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* (30, 230, 5)

Buckinghamshire Linford Gravel-pits, 11th May (A. R. Frost, T. & W. R. Tunnicliffe); same, Willen Lake, 11th, photo. (E. J. Reed, C. Ward *et al.*).

Dorset Ferrybridge, 11th May (H. G. Wood Homer). Stanpit Marsh, 23rd July, photo. (P. Donaldson, I. & J. Southworth *et al.*).

Norfolk Strumpshaw Fen and Buckenham, 16th June (M. A. Chipperfield, A. & M. A. Snelling *et al.*);



Mike Malpass

294. First-winter Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica*, Titchwell, Norfolk, November 2001.

same, Cantley and Breydon, 17th, photo. (per G. E. Dunmore).

Suffolk Burgh Castle, 17th June (L. Woods, J. Zantboer); same as Norfolk.

Sussex, West Worthing, 12th May (P. M. Brayshaw).

(Isolated and declining European population breeds on Baltic coasts of Estonia, Sweden and Finland to head of Gulf of Bothnia. To E, fragmented populations from Black Sea coast of Ukraine across steppe-lake region of C Asia to NW Mongolia and E China. European birds winter in W Africa to Gulf of Guinea, while Asian populations winter on coasts to S of breeding range. Other populations in Australia, S Africa and North America.)

The target bird for gravel-pit watchers across the land!

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* (20, 96, 3)

Bedfordshire Stewartby Lake, first-winter, 31st October (K. B. Shepherd, P. Wright *et al.*); also in Buckinghamshire.

Buckinghamshire Willen Lake, first-winter, 29th-31st October, photo. (A. V. Harding, W. R. Tunnicliffe *et al.*); same as Bedfordshire (plates 295 & 296).

Kent Stodmarsh, 13th May (J. Farnham, R. H. Lawrence).

Northeast Scotland Meikle Loch, adult, 27th-29th June, 1st-3rd July (P. S. Crockett, K. Gillon *et al.*); same, Loch of Strathbeg, 30th June (M. B. Cowie, I. J. Kelman *et al.*).

(Opportunistic and erratic breeder through S and E Europe, from Iberia to Poland. Numerous and



Mike Wallen



Mike Wallen

295 & 296. First-winter Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*, Willen Lake, Buckinghamshire, October 2001.

widespread from N Black Sea E to W Kazakhstan, with Volga/Ural River complex holding most of European population. Winters in tropical W and C Africa and from Nile delta to E Africa. Other populations in Indian subcontinent, E Asia, S Africa and Australia.)

Scotland's second Whiskered Tern was well received, since the first one was way back in May 1894!

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* (50, 690, 16)

Avon Blagdon Lake, second-summer, 4th-10th August (N. Milbourne *et al.*).

Cambridgeshire Fen Drayton Gravel-pits, juvenile, 24th September (J. S. Clark).

Carmarthenshire Sandywater Park, Llanelli, juvenile/first-winter, 16th-17th October, photo. (G. Harper *et al.*).

Cleveland Saltholme Pools, 4th-10th June, photo. (T. Francis *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 200).

Cumbria Port Carlisle, second-summer, 11th-22nd July (D. G. H. West *et al.*).

Fife Kilconquar Loch, 14th-16th May, photo. (J. L. S. Cobb, M. Oksien).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Marshside Marsh, 19th-21st June (T. Baker, G. Clarkson *et al.*); first noted Martin Mere, 18th, photo. (A. P. Bunting *et al.* per S. J. White).

Norfolk Kelling Quag, second-summer, 20th-27th July, photo. (D. A. Bridges, A. J. L. Smith *et al.*); same, Cley, 23rd (per G. E. Dunmore). Cley, adult, 3rd-5th August, photo. (J. V. Bhalarao *et al.*).

Blakeney Point, juvenile, 24th August (C. Gooddie, G. Hogan, G. Rosenberg).

Orkney Herston, South Ronaldsay, adult, 8th July (R. J. Simpson). Loch of Tankerness, first-summer, 9th July, photo. (K. E. Hague).

Suffolk Sizewell, juvenile, 22nd August (M. L. Cornish, R. Drew *et al.*).

Warwickshire Kingsbury Water Park, juvenile, 26th August (T. Jones, M. Preece, J. Winsper *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Hornsea Mere, juvenile/first-winter, 1st-28th October, photo. (E. Clubleby, A. & N. Hart, R. V. Moat *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 347; 95: plates 297 & 298).

Yorkshire, South Old Moor Wetlands, juvenile/first-winter, 20th October (N. W. Addey, J. W. Thompson, D. M. Waddington *et al.*).

1998 Yorkshire, West Astley Lake, first-winter, 30th October (G. Leach, N. Smith *et al.*); presumed same as Dewsbury, 11th October (*Brit. Birds* 94: 480).

1999 Staffordshire Belvide Reservoir, adult, 3rd August (S. Nuttall *et al.*).

2000 Cambridgeshire Grafham Water, juvenile, 28th August, photo. (O. R. & M. Marks *et al.*).

2000 Cheshire Frodsham, 21st May (R. Cockbain).

2000 Essex Barking Bay, adult, 14th July (P. Street *et al.*).

2000 Kent Dungeness, 6th May (N. A. Driver *et al.*).

(W limit of European range from Poland to Hungary, where local, with sporadic breeding to W. Breeds commonly from Belarus, W Russia and Ukraine E to S Siberia, N Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Russian Far East and NE China, but absent from large areas. Winters throughout sub-Saharan Africa, Indian subcontinent, SE Asia and N Australia.)



297 & 298. Juvenile/first-winter White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*, Hornsea, East Yorkshire, October 2001.

Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* (2, 33, 1)

Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-winter, recently dead, 29th January, photo., now at National Museum of Scotland (M. Gray *et al.*).

(Apparently declining, but huge colonies remain in Greenland, Iceland, Svalbard and Novaya Zemlya, with tiny population in NE Norway. Outside Europe, breeds on islands off N Siberia into Bering Sea, S to Kuril, Kommander, Aleutian and Pribilof Islands. Also W Alaska and N Canada from Baffin Island to Hudson Bay, Labrador coast and W Greenland. Winters among open leads in pack ice or at sea from Barents Sea S to N Norway, S Greenland, and along Labrador coast S to NE USA. Other populations winter in N Pacific, S to N Japan.)

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* (6, 34, 2)

Cornwall Land's End, first-summer, 25th March, video. (C. C. Barnard *et al.*).

Kent Sandwich Bay, first-summer, 7th March, photo. (O. Slessor *et al.*).

(Common summer migrant to Spain, rare and local breeder in Portugal, S France and E to Greece. W Asian population uncommon, breeding discontinuously from C Turkey, Cyprus, Israel and Jordan to N Iraq and SW Iran. Palearctic breeders winter in sub-Saharan Africa but range uncertain owing to African populations there.)

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* (22, 35, 0)

2000 Cornwall St Levan, 12th-13th October (*Brit. Birds* 94: 480), found/identified by A. Clifton, L. Hopkins, G. N. Smith.

(Breeds across S Canada from British Columbia to New Brunswick, and throughout the USA to C Mexico. Winters in South America, S to Argentina.)

Eurasian Scops Owl

Otus scops (65, 25, 1)

Shetland Cunningsburgh, 14th May, photo. (J. Nicolson, J. D. Okill, K. Osborn *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 174; 95: plate 299).

(Common summer migrant to N Africa and S Europe, from Iberia N to C France and E to Greece. Also breeds across Ukraine, S Russia and S Siberia to W Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Iran. Most winter in N equatorial Africa, but some remain in S Europe.)

The Northern Isles have a good record for this southern species, although most have been seen in Orkney. To add to the list is an additional pre-1958 record of one found dead on 23rd June 1954 at Northdale, Fetlar, Shetland, which now resides in a private collection.



299. Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops*, Cunningsburgh, Shetland, May 2001.

Jim Nicolson

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* (many, 154, 2)

Cumbria Kentmere Valley, 14th September (S. Allen, C. H. Fry *et al.*).

Suffolk Felixstowe, first-winter ♀, 24th October to 6th December, photo. (M. Case, E. W. Patrick *et al.*); same, Waldringfield, 8th-9th December (per D. F. Walsh).

(Occasionally breeds in N Scandinavia and Iceland, depending on availability of small mammals. Outside Europe, erratic circumpolar breeder across tundra and N islands of Arctic Russia, Siberia, Alaska, Canada and N Greenland. Most disperse S in winter, but some resident or nomadic if food available.)

The Suffolk bird was linked to an 'arrival' of several Snowy Owls which landed on a ship off the coast of Canada and then disembarked in the southern North Sea, with several seen in the Low Countries at this time. Given its location and the layer of oily filth on its plumage, it is highly likely that this was part of the same arrival. The one in Cumbria is the first there in the modern era and is a most unusual record.

Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica* (0, 12, 1)

Scilly St Mary's, 28th October, video. (R. L. Flood, K. Webb *et al.*); same, St Martin's, 29th (C. Robson per P. A. Stancliffe).

(Breeds S Canada and throughout USA E of Rockies to Gulf of Mexico. Winters upper Amazon basin, Peru, and perhaps elsewhere in South America.)

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* (50, 401, 6)

Cornwall St Ives, 8th April (J. Clarke *et al.*).

Devon Berry Head, 1st October (M. R. Langman *et al.*).

Essex Hooks Marsh, Lea Valley Country Park, 13th October (H. Vaughan).

Norfolk Docketing, 11th June (R. Q. Skeen).

Sussex, East Eastbourne, dead, 26th March, photo. (G. Rumsey).

Yorkshire, North Burniston, 27th June (S. Wignill).

1999 Gower Eglwys Nunydd Reservoir, 13th May (M. Bailey-Wood).

(Breeds discontinuously in NW Africa and throughout S Europe, N to C France and Switzerland, to Ukraine. To E, breeds locally through Turkey and Caucasus to Iran, Afghanistan and N Pakistan. Winter range unknown, but assumed to be in Afrotropics or W India where separation of local populations from northern migrants not possible.)

After last year's poor showing this is not much of an improvement.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* (0, 25, 9)

Essex Cudmore Grove Country Park, 18th October (A. Thompson, D. Urquhart *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, 31st October (B. Chambers, D. Walker *et al.*).

Norfolk West Runton and Cromer, 20th October (G. J. Etherington *et al.*).

Northumberland Hauxley, 20th October (M. J. Carr, I. Fisher). Tynemouth, 24th-25th October (M. Hepple, C. Kehoe *et al.*); possibly same, Widdrington, 25th (N. Foggo *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Porthgain, 5th-7th October, video. (B. D. Gibbs *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 2nd October (J. M. Reid, D. N. Shaw).

Yorkshire, North Filey, 24th October (P. J. Dunn, G. V. Watola *et al.*).

(Locally common throughout Mediterranean basin from Iberia to Greece, but rare or absent from many regions. Outside Europe, breeds locally from Mauritania and Canary Islands across NW Africa and Middle East to Arabian peninsula and S Iran. Most winter in N African tropics, but some remain in S Europe.)

There were just ten records of this species before 1998, but 12 in 1999 and another nine in 2001 takes the total up to 34. It is very difficult to work out how many individuals are involved in situations like those in northeast England, where there were three sightings some distance apart during a short period of time. For a fast-flying species like this, all of these could relate to the same individual but equally, as we have seen before, multiple arrivals can happen, and late autumn is the time for them. This year's influx was linked with a warm, unsettled spell associated with an arrival of southern air. We

know when and where to look and there is no doubt that birders are getting better at identifying Pallid Swift, but Common Swifts *A. apus* can occur in late autumn too.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* (0, 16, 1)

Nottinghamshire Netherfield Lagoon, 26th-29th May, photo. (T. Lister, A. Przesnak *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 176; 95: plate 300).

(Isolated population in NW Africa, increasing and expanding in Morocco. Breeds locally and discontinuously in Middle East from Israel to SE Iran and N along Euphrates River to SE Turkey. Largely resident, but some Middle Eastern populations migratory. Elsewhere, resident or dispersive throughout sub-Saharan Africa and Indian subcontinent to Sri Lanka.)

This was a well-watched, very obliging and extremely popular bird. It had the good grace to arise rather late from its overnight roost, eliminating the need for a very early start for those who wanted to see it, not that many admirers took that for granted.



George Reszeter

300. Little Swift *Apus affinis*, Netherfield, Nottinghamshire, May 2001.

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* (135, 93, 1)

Pembrokeshire Skokholm, first-winter, 26th October, photo. (T. Purcell, G. Thompson).

(Declining, yet remains widespread and numerous in NW Africa and Spain. In E Europe, occurs locally N to Estonia and E to Ukraine but nowhere common. More common from Turkey and S Russia to S Urals, SW Siberia, S Kazakhstan and W China. Winters locally in equatorial W Africa but most in E Africa from Kenya to Zimbabwe. Another race, *C. g. semenowi*, breeds Iran, Afghanistan and N Pakistan, and winters in E Africa.)

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* (7, 342, 16)

Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes, 20th May, photo. (C. Carson, P. Herkenroth *et al.*).

Cheshire Sandbach Flashes, 15th May (A. G. Goodwin *et al.*).

Cornwall Nanjizal, 11th May (K. A. Wilson). Land's End, 12th May (D. Eva *et al.*).

Gloucestershire Slimbridge, 5th April (L. P. Alder, M. J. McGill *et al.*).

Norfolk Eccles-on-Sea, 3rd November, photo. (J. V. Bhalerao *et al.*). Winterton, 4th November (P. Cawley *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 21st-23rd May, photo. (E. A. Fisher, R. L. Flood, R. J. Walker *et al.*).

Worcestershire Westwood Pool, 17th April (W. Dutton *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Southfield Reservoir, 17th May (S. Mitchell). Spurn, two, 19th May (the late N. A. Bell *et al.*); another, 19th (P. R. Massey, R. Swales *et al.*); another, 23rd (M. G. Stoyle); another, 19th June (the late N. A. Bell *et al.*); 28th October (A. Hutt *et al.*).

2000 Devon Hallsands, 30th April (P. J. Barden).

2000 Orkney Rendall, 12th May (I. A. Dillon, J. B. Ribbands *et al.*).

2000 Yorkshire, East Tophill Low, 9th May (T. M. Richardson).

(Widespread and locally common in NW Africa, Iberia, Balkans and Greece but uncommon in C Mediterranean. To E, breeds discontinuously in W and S Turkey and Middle East. Wintering area of European population unknown but assumed to lie in N equatorial Africa. Other populations breed in E Asia from S Siberia to S China and Japan, Indian subcontinent and locally in equatorial Africa.)

Spurn enjoyed a pretty remarkable run of records, accounting for over a third of those seen in 2001.

Cliff Swallow *Hirundo pyrrhonota* (0, 8, 1)

Scilly St Agnes, first-winter, 26th October, photo. (M. Hicks, D. Page *et al.*); same, St Martin's, 26th-27th (per P. A. Stancliffe); same, St Mary's, 28th-30th, photo. (R. L. Flood *et al.*).

2000 Hampshire Titchfield Haven, 1st October (B. S. Duffin, D. R. R. Powell *et al.*); possibly same as Portland, Dorset, 29th-30th September (*Brit. Birds* 94: 483).

(Breeds throughout North America from W Alaska to Nova Scotia, throughout USA except SE, and S to S Mexico. Winters South America from Brazil to Chile and Argentina.)

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* (1, 9, 0)

1999 Norfolk Happisburgh, 25th to at least 28th September (M. Fiszer, P. J. Heath, A. J. Kane *et al.*).

(Breeds from S Transbaikalia and N Mongolia to extreme NE China and S to Tibet. Winters locally throughout Indian subcontinent.)

The views of this bird were rather poor but fortunately it called frequently (and distinctively) in flight.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (1, 222, 18)

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, 26th September (K. M. Wilson).

Lothian Thorntonloch, 15th October (C. N. Davison, K. Gillon *et al.*).

Norfolk Holkham Meals, 26th September (C. D. R. Heard *et al.*).

Northumberland Farne Islands, 28th-29th September (S. Davies *et al.*); 14th-15th October, photo. (S. Davies, R. M. Harvey, T. Sykes). Prior's Park, 23rd October (M. P. Carruthers, C. Kehoe).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 28th September, photo. (D. H. Hatton *et al.*); another, 28th (P. J. Donnelly, D. H. Hatton *et al.*); 30th September (P. A. Brown *et al.*); 3rd October (H. Bell, A. E. Duncan *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skomer, 24th April (D. P. Boyle).

Scilly St Agnes, 12th-17th October (D. Scattergood, B. J. Small, N. Topliss *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 6th May (P. R. French, D. N. Shaw *et al.*); 8th October (S. E. Duffield, M. Maher); intermittently, 17th-24th October (H. E. Maggs *et al.*); another, 26th-27th (D. N. Shaw *et al.*). Kergord, 25th-27th September, photo. (P. S. Crockett, K. Gillon, D. & N. Hall *et al.*). Symbister, Whalsay, 8th October (P. V. Harvey, B. Marshall).

2000 Shetland Williamsetter, 10th November (H. R. Harrop).

(European range restricted to N Urals. Widespread across C and E Siberia to N China, Kamchatka, Kuril Islands and Japan. Winters widely across S China, Taiwan and throughout N and C parts of SE Asia. Population in Himalayas and mountains of west-central China winters throughout Indian subcontinent.)

Eighteen constitutes another big year after 16 last year. The records were well spread, but with a Shetland bias, which is fairly typical.

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* (13, 53, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, 4th October, probably same 8th (P. R. French *et al.*).

(Breeds within narrow region of scrub-tundra and taiga of subarctic Eurasia, from Pechora region of NE Russia across Siberia to Chukotka peninsula and Kamchatka. Migrates through E China and Taiwan to wintering areas in Philippines, N Borneo and N Sulawesi. Isolated population in NE China.)

With a couple of Pallas's Grasshopper Warblers outside Shetland in 2001, appetites will be whetted down the east coast for a parallel performance from this equally difficult Northern Isles speciality. In the meantime, however, there is really only one place to go if you want to optimise your chances of seeing one in Britain.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* (30, 378, 4)

Cornwall Nanjizal, 22nd-23rd May (K. A. Wilson).

Scilly St Mary's, 22nd-28th October, photo. (J. P. Martin *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 348).

Shetland Fair Isle, in song, 16th-18th June (H. E. Maggs *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Filey, 13th May (P. Cunningham, J. & T. Davies *et al.*).

2000 Dorset Hengistbury Head, 24th August (D. N. Smith, I. Southworth).

(Breeds in Arctic Eurasia, from N Norway, Sweden and Finland E to Chukotka peninsula and S to Kamchatka, with small numbers in W Alaska. Winters across N and C equatorial Africa, S China and SE Asia.)

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (2, 129, 5)

Cornwall Land's End, first-summer C, 15th-16th May (K. A. Wilson *et al.*).

Lothian Musselburgh, first-summer F, 22nd-24th June, photo. (D. J. Britton, S. Hunter *et al.*).

Shetland Quendale, juvenile, 2nd to at least 17th September (A. Fitchett, P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington *et al.*). Bakkasetter, Spiggie, juvenile/first-winter, 9th-20th September (A. Fitchett, P. V. Harvey, M. Mellor *et al.*); juvenile/first-winter, 12th-21st, photo. (P. M. Ellis, P. Sclater, K. D. Shaw *et al.*).

2000 Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 21st-24th September (A. E. Duncan, P. R. French, R. McGregor); additional to 22nd-28th (*Brit. Birds* 94: 485).

(Nominate race breeds in N Russia, from E Kola and Kanin peninsula across N Siberia to Taimyr peninsula and S to C Siberia. Range of C Asian *M. c. werae* expanded W during 20th century; small numbers now breed regularly in Belarus, Baltic countries and occasionally S Finland; otherwise from Ukraine and S Russia, E across N Kazakhstan and Mongolia to N China. Another race breeds on Tibetan plateau. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent, S China and SE Asia to peninsula Thailand.)

Those in south Mainland Shetland caused a few problems when trying to work out just how many individuals there were, but a combination of careful recording and some photographic evidence helped us to clarify that there were three birds present simultaneously, a previously unparalleled performance.

Grey Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis* (0, 0, 1)

Anglesey South Stack, 4th-5th October (K. G. Croft *et al.*).

(Breeds across S Canada from British Columbia to Nova Scotia, S through C and E USA to Texas and Georgia. Winters from S USA through C America to Panama.)

Not the most obliging bird but a 'first' for Britain, although there was one in Ireland in early November 1986 and one in Jersey from October to December 1975.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (2, 136, 2)

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, in song, 15th May, sound-recorded (K. M. Wilson *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Spurn, first-summer, 12th-13th May, photo. (the late N. A. Bell, D. R. Middleton, B. R. Spence *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 178).

1996 Caithness Wick, 22nd May (P. Miller, J. & R. Smith).

(Widespread throughout E Europe with dramatic population increase in 20th century. Range still expanding NW into W Norway, and locally abundant in S Scandinavia and Baltic countries. C European range from Denmark SE to Romania and Ukraine, and through temperate European Russia to S Siberia. Winters E Africa, from S Kenya to Zimbabwe.)

Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope* (0, 2, 1)

Shetland Hulma Lees, Bixter, F, probably first-winter, freshly dead on road, 25th October, photo., specimen retained by D. Coutts (D. Coutts, J. A. Johnson *et al.*).

(Occurs throughout Siberia from Ob River E to Anadyr' and Kamchatka, with small numbers to European foothills of Urals in W. S limit reaches N Mongolia, Ussuriland, NE Hokkaido and NE China, with isolated population on E slopes of Tibetan plateau. Winters from Nepal E through Himalayan foothills to NE India, Burma and N Indochina to C Thailand, S China and Taiwan.)

How galling would that be: finding a pristine male Siberian Rubythroat – dead! Dead or alive, they still look superb. There was some controversy over this bird's age but the presence of some pale wing-covert tips strongly suggested a bird of the year.

Siberian Blue Robin *Luscinia cyane* (0, 1, 1)

Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-winter F, 2nd October, photo. (P. A. Brown *et al.*).

2000 Suffolk Minsmere, C or first-winter, 23rd October (M. L. Cornish, K. Foster, P. L. Varney *et al.*).

(Breeds S Siberia from Russian Altai E to Sakhalin and S to N Mongolia, NE China and N Japan. Winters throughout SE Asia.)

After such a long wait, the first two appear in consecutive years. The Suffolk bird was accepted by BBRC before the one in Orkney appeared.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* (3, 22, 1)

Cleveland Skinningrove, C or first-winter, 25th September (N. Jackson, D. A. Money *et al.*).

(Tiny population persists in NE Finland but main range in cool temperate forests of N Eurasia from E Russia and Siberia to Kamchatka, N Japan and NE China. Winters S China, Taiwan and S Japan, through SE Asia to N peninsula Thailand.)

The finders came across a Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* almost simultaneously. It does not get much better for mainland rarity hunters.

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*

Eastern race *S. t. maura* (1, 281, 13)

Cleveland Boulby Cliffs, C or first-winter, 26th September (I. Bousted, D. J. Britton, D. Hursthouse).

Cornwall Bass Point, Lizard, first-winter F, 13th October, possibly since 12th, video. (E. Cook, P. A. Fraser).

Devon Start Point, C or first-winter, 26th September (M. R. Langman, B. Macdonald) (fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Female or first-winter 'Siberian Stonechat' *Saxicola torquata maura*, Start Point, Devon, September 2001

Northumberland Holy Island, C or first-winter, 20th-21st September, video./photo. (A. D. McLevy, N. F. Osborne); first-winter C, 21st (M. Richardson *et al.*); one or other to 22nd. Snab Point, Cresswell, first-winter F, 21st to at least 22nd September, photo. (I. Fisher, S. Sexton *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 320). St Mary's, Whitley Bay, C or first-winter, 25th September to 12th October, photo. (C. G. Knox *et al.*); another, 4th-12th October, possibly since 25th September (A. Curry, I. Fisher, K. W. Regan *et al.*).

Shetland Sumburgh, C or first-winter, 21st-22nd September (P. M. Ellis, D. Houghton *et al.*); first-winter F, 6th-9th October (P. M. Ellis, R. Riddington, K. D. Shaw *et al.*).

Sussex, East Sheepcote Valley, first-winter F, 16th-17th October (A. D. & I. J. Whitcomb).

Yorkshire, North Scalby Lodge, Scarborough, F, 22nd-23rd September (M. Francis, J. Hewitt *et al.*).

Castle Hill, Scarborough, C or first-winter, 25th September (N. W. Addey, E. & S. Wignill).

(Breeds widely across N Asia from N Urals S to N Caspian Sea, Mongolia and N China, E to Kolyma basin, Okhotsk coast and N Japan. Winters from N Indian subcontinent to S China and SE Asia.)

A good year, with a flurry of peachy rumps on the coasts of northeast England in late September.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* (1, 16, 2)

Shetland Funzie, Fetlar, age/sex uncertain, 14th-15th September, photo. (D. Houghton, J. Moore *et al.*).

Suffolk Landguard, C or first-winter, trapped 21st September, photo. (W. J. Brame, N. Odin *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 321).

(Small European population restricted to E Greece, Bulgaria, Ukraine and SW Russia. In Asia, breeds widely across arid grasslands from Turkey through Kazakhstan, Mongolia and N China, S to Iran and N Pakistan. Winters from N Sahel zone to E Africa, and throughout Middle East from Arabian peninsula to S Iran, Pakistan and NW India.)

Pied Wheatear

Oenanthe pleschanka

(3, 40, 1)

Scilly St Mary's, first-winter F, 14th-18th October, photo. (J. Bartlett, K. Colcombe, C. Wells *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 349; 95: plate 301).

(European range centred on Black Sea, reaching E Romania and Bulgaria. To E, small numbers in S and E Ukraine, but occurs widely across S Russia, S Siberia, Kazakhstan and Mongolia to N China, E to Gulf of Bohai. Winters in NE and E Africa, and SW Arabian peninsula.)

Given the date and the location, this was a popular and well-watched bird, although it caused a great deal of debate about the potential confusion with 'Eastern' Black-eared Wheatear *O. hispanica melanoleuca*.



301. First-winter male Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 2001.

Reston Kilgour

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* (15, 43, 0)

2000 Dorset Upton Heath, first-summer, *O. h. melanoleuca*, 25th-26th June, photo. (C. Button, J. Lidster *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: 487); sex was male not female.

(Breeds Mediterranean basin; nominate form in NW Africa and Iberia, E to France and N Italy; eastern form, *O. h. melanoleuca*, from S Italy to Greece, and SW Asia from Turkey to S Caucasus, S to Israel and SW Iran. Winters widely across N tropical Africa from Senegal and N Nigeria to Ethiopia and Eritrea.)

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (11, 65, 0)

1998 Kent Folkestone Warren, F, 28th March (D. A. & J. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts); possibly same as Reculver, 29th (*Brit. Birds* 93: 550).

(Breeds widely but discontinuously across arid and desert regions of N Africa from Morocco to Middle East, N to S Caucasus, and across C Asia from C Iran and N Pakistan to Mongolia and N China. Some N African birds resident, but many winter in Sahara and Sahel region of N Africa from Mauritania E to Ethiopia and Somalia. Asian breeders winter from Arabian peninsula to NW India.)

Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* (1, 39, 1)

Orkney Stromness, first-winter, 14th-16th October, trapped 16th, photo. (K. Fairclough, K. Smith *et al.*).

(Breeds extreme NE Siberia E throughout Alaska and N Canada to Labrador and Newfoundland. Migrates across E USA to winter in N South America.)

This species has a wide spread of records for an American vagrant, with several previous records in the Northern Isles. A good garden find which survived longer than many of its predecessors, a large proportion of which have provided a lean but tasty snack for local cats.

Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* (0, 17, 1)

Outer Hebrides Hirta, St Kilda, first-winter, 1st-2nd October, photo. (A. Robinson *et al.*).

(Breeds in Siberia, from Yenisei River E to Sea of Okhotsk and Kamchatka, S to Lake Baikal, N Mongolia and Amurland. Migrates across much of China to winter in Taiwan, Indochina and Thailand S to Singapore, Sumatra, Philippines and N Borneo.)

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* (3, 23, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, *T. r. atrogularis*, age/sex uncertain, 14th-17th April (D. N. Shaw *et al.*).

(Western, black-throated form *T. r. atrogularis* breeds in C and N Urals, E across SW Siberia and E Kazakhstan, to NW China. Winters Iraq to N India, E through Himalayan foothills to Bhutan. Nominative red-throated form breeds to E, in C Siberia, wintering in E Himalayas and S fringe of Tibetan plateau from Nepal to SW China, and N to NE China.)

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler

Locustella certhiola (3, 21, 3)

Norfolk Blakeney Point, first-winter, 22nd-24th September, photo. (S. C. Joyner, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plates 322-323; 95: plate 302).

Northumberland Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, first-winter, 29th September (S. J. McElwee, J. G. Steele *et al.*) (fig. 5).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, trapped 19th October, photo. (D. N. Shaw *et al.*).

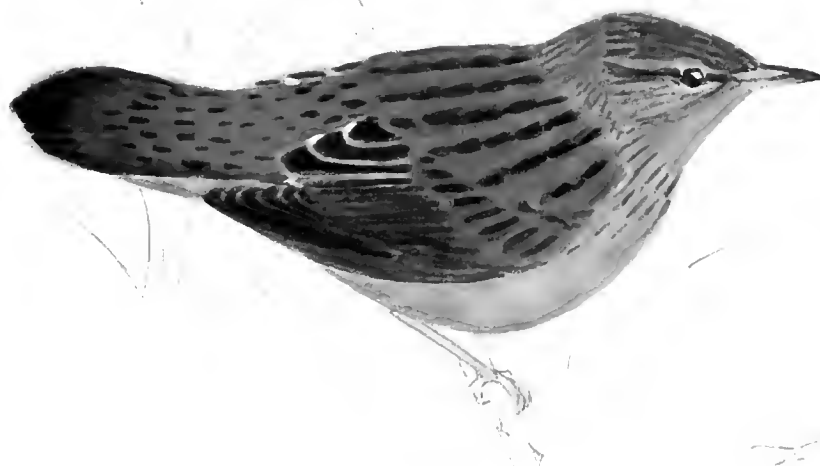
(The race *rubescens* breeds across C and E Siberia, N to 64°N, from Irtysh River E to Yakutia and Sea of Okhotsk. Three other races breed to the S, from NE Kazakhstan through Mongolia to Ussuriland and N and NE China. Winters from NE India to S China, and S throughout SE Asia.)

Three in a year has only been exceeded once, in 1998, when there were four, all of them on Fair Isle. Two records of this enigmatic skulker in mainland England is completely unprecedented, only the third and fourth English records, and the first to be genuinely twitchable. Both provoked a rapid response, and though for many it was a frustrating experience, the Norfolk individual at least allowed the visitors a decent look and some cracking photographs.



George Reszeter

302. First-winter Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola*, Blakeney Point, Norfolk, September 2001.



Pallas's
Grasshopper
Warbler
Newbiggin
29th September
2001.

J. Steele

Jimmy Steele

Fig. 5. First-winter Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola*, Newbiggin, Northumberland, September 2001.

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* (9, 80, 3)

Shetland Fair Isle, 23rd September (P. R. French, P. V. Harvey, P. Walsh *et al.*); another, 24th-25th, video. (D. N. Shaw, P. Walsh *et al.*). Sumburgh, 14th October (R. Riddington).

(Singing males regular in E Finland. To E, breeds discontinuously from C Urals E across much of Siberia to Kamchatka, Kuril Islands, Hokkaido and NE China. Winters in Indian subcontinent, from Nepal E through NE India into SE Asia and Philippines.)

With this species, the almost total domination of Shetland continues. This is a very difficult species to confirm, one which requires careful attention to detail, and very good views are usually required. Lots of experience of finding them also helps.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* (many, 601, 8)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, in song, 9th-10th May (K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*).

Gloucestershire Frampton on Severn, in song, 20th May to 4th June, sound-recorded (M. J. King *et al.*).

Kent South Swale Nature Reserve, in song, 23rd May (A. W. Swandale). Grove Ferry, in song, 26th May (B. E. Wright *et al.*); present 23rd-26th.

Norfolk Holme/Thornham, in song, 15th-31st May, photo. (G. F. Hibberd *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 179). Strumpshaw Fen, in song, 11th-22nd June (M. Chipperfield, P. J. Heath, T. Strudwick *et al.*).

Hickling, in song, 14th-24th June (P. J. Heath, A. J. Kane *et al.*).

Yorkshire, South Old Moor Wetlands, in song, 23rd-29th April, trapped 29th, photo. (N. W. Addey, J. Hewitt, D. M. Waddington *et al.*).

2000 Sussex, East Locality withheld, in song, 29th April (observer's name withheld).

(Breeds discontinuously in W Europe, from Iberia to Netherlands; range contracting to SE, although still expanding NE into Estonia. To E, occurs through temperate Russia S through Ukraine to Black Sea coasts. European birds winter in W Africa from Senegal to N Nigeria. Another race, *L. l. fusca*, breeds in C Asia from Caspian Sea E across Kazakhstan to NW China, wintering in NE Africa.)

Since its readmission in 1999 to the list of species considered by the Committee there have been 20 records in three years, and all have been of birds in potential breeding habitat. A non-singing coastal migrant is a major rarity, much rarer than Lanceolated *L. lanceolata* or even Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *L. certhiola*.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* (2, 43, 1)

Cornwall Cot Valley, first-winter, 15th November (M. K. Ahmad, M. T. Elliott *et al.*) (fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*, Cot Valley, Cornwall, November 2001.

1997 Scilly St Mary's, 9th to at least 10th June (*Brit. Birds* 91: 505), now considered inadequately documented.

2000 Hampshire Titchfield Haven, first-winter, trapped 1st October, photo. (D. A. Bell, T. D. Codlin, B. S. Duffin *et al.*).

(In Europe, restricted to Black Sea coasts from Bulgaria and Danube delta E to Ukraine. To E, breeds widely across steppes of S Russia and SW Siberia, Kazakhstan and NW China, S to Uzbekistan and N Pakistan. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent.)

A well-watched bird on Scilly in October (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 350) has not yet been submitted.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (9, 34, 5)

Dorset Portland Bill, first-winter, trapped 12th November, photo. (M. Cade, P. J. Morgan *et al.*).

Fife Fife Ness, trapped 28th September, photo. (J. L. S. Cobb *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 25th-26th September, trapped 25th, photo. (D. H. Hatton, S. J. Holloway, S. A. Stirrup, T. Wilson *et al.*).

Shetland Foula, first-winter, 22nd September to 1st October, trapped 22nd, photo. (J. M. & T. P. Drew, A. R. Mainwood, M. A. Wilkinson). Hoswick, first-winter, trapped 27th September, possibly present since 24th (P. M. Ellis, R. Riddington *et al.*).

1975 Yorkshire, North Filey Brigg, 30th August (*Brit. Birds* 69: 348), now considered inadequately documented.

1996 Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 22nd-27th September (*Brit. Birds* 90: 499), was trapped 22nd.

(Breeds in S Finland, Estonia, Latvia and European Russia to 64°N. To E, found across C Siberia to Lake Baikal and upper Lena River, S through Kazakhstan and Tajikistan to N Pakistan. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent S to Sri Lanka and E into NW Burma.)

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (23, 185, 1)

Cleveland Coatham Marsh, in song, 15th-16th May (M. A. Blick, T. Francis *et al.*).

2000 Shetland Virkie, date uncertain, late May, video. (J. Kay per P. V. Harvey, I. S. Robertson).

(Breeds discontinuously throughout much of continental Europe from Iberia to Greece, N to S Sweden and Finland, and E across S Russia, Turkey and Caucasus to W Siberia. To E, *A. a. zarudnyi* breeds in C Asia from Volga to NW China. Winters throughout C and S Africa.)

Details of one in Lincolnshire in late May are still to be received.

Thick-billed Warbler

Acrocephalus aedon (1, 1, 1)

Shetland Out Skerries, first-winter, trapped 14th September, photo. (P. M. Ellis, P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington, K. D. Shaw *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plates 285-286; 95: plate 303).

(Breeds in S Siberia from Ob basin and N Mongolia to Ussuriland and NE China. Winters from Nepal E through NE India to Indochina and C Thailand.)

Long awaited since the last, way back in 1971. This bird was dug out on a quiet day on the Out Skerries, but did not stick around long enough to be seen by more than a few lucky locals. A full account of the record can be found in *Birding World* 14: 372-373.



Roger Riddington

303. First-winter Thick-billed Warbler *Acrocephalus aedon*, Out Skerries, Shetland, September 2001.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* (1, 86, 2)

Scilly St Agnes, 26th-29th August (D. Bradshaw, D. Gandy, D. Page *et al.*). Treco, 19th October, video. (R. M. & R. P. Fray, A. J. Mackay).

(Nominate *caligata* is expanding W, and breeds in S Finland. To E, occurs from C Russia and W Siberia to Yenisei valley and W Mongolia. In C Kazakhstan occurs alongside *H. c. rama*, which breeds in C and S Kazakhstan to NW China, Iran, Afghanistan and from N Pakistan to Gulf States. Both forms winter throughout Indian subcontinent.)

The August record on Scilly was the earliest ever away from the east coast. BBRC has undertaken a detailed review of some earlier records that may have shown characteristics of 'Sykes's Warbler' *H. (caligata) rama*. Safe identification of this form generally requires careful measurement and in-the-hand assessment. Further details will be published in due course.

Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda* (0, 3, 2)

Norfolk Scolt Head, in song, 12th, 18th May (N. M. Lawton *et al.*).

Suffolk Sizewell, F, 29th May, video., photo. (J. Davies, A. Miller, C. Powell *et al.*) (fig. 7).

(Nominate *sarda* is restricted to Corsica, Sardinia and small islands off W coast of Italy, and N Tunisia. Winters in N Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. Another form, *balearica*, is resident on Balearic Islands.)

Two in one year is unprecedented. It is, of course, possible that these two records may relate to the same individual, but given the distance and direction of movement, as well as the skulking nature of the species, it seems more likely that two birds were involved. If that is the case, then others may have been missed. It is likely that all the British records are of the nominate form *sarda*, but the Committee is about to examine the files to confirm this.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* (12, 443, 17)

Cornwall Nanjizal, F, 14th-16th April (K. A. Wilson).

Devon Wembury, F, 8th April (C. & R. Rhodes).

Dorset Portland Bill, first-summer C, trapped 12th April, photo. (M. Cade, P. J. Morgan *et al.*). Southwell, Portland, F, 17th April, photo. (P. & D. Saunders per M. Cade).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Lytham St Anne's, F, 13th June (M. Jones *et al.*).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, F, 24th-25th May (M. L. Cornish, J. Reid, D. Wood). Wells Wood, first-winter F, 27th October to 1st November, photo. (A. I. Bloomfield, P. A. & S. J. A. Gluth *et al.*).

Orkney Birsay, F, 18th-22nd May (L. & H. Leek *et al.*).



304. First winter Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 2001.

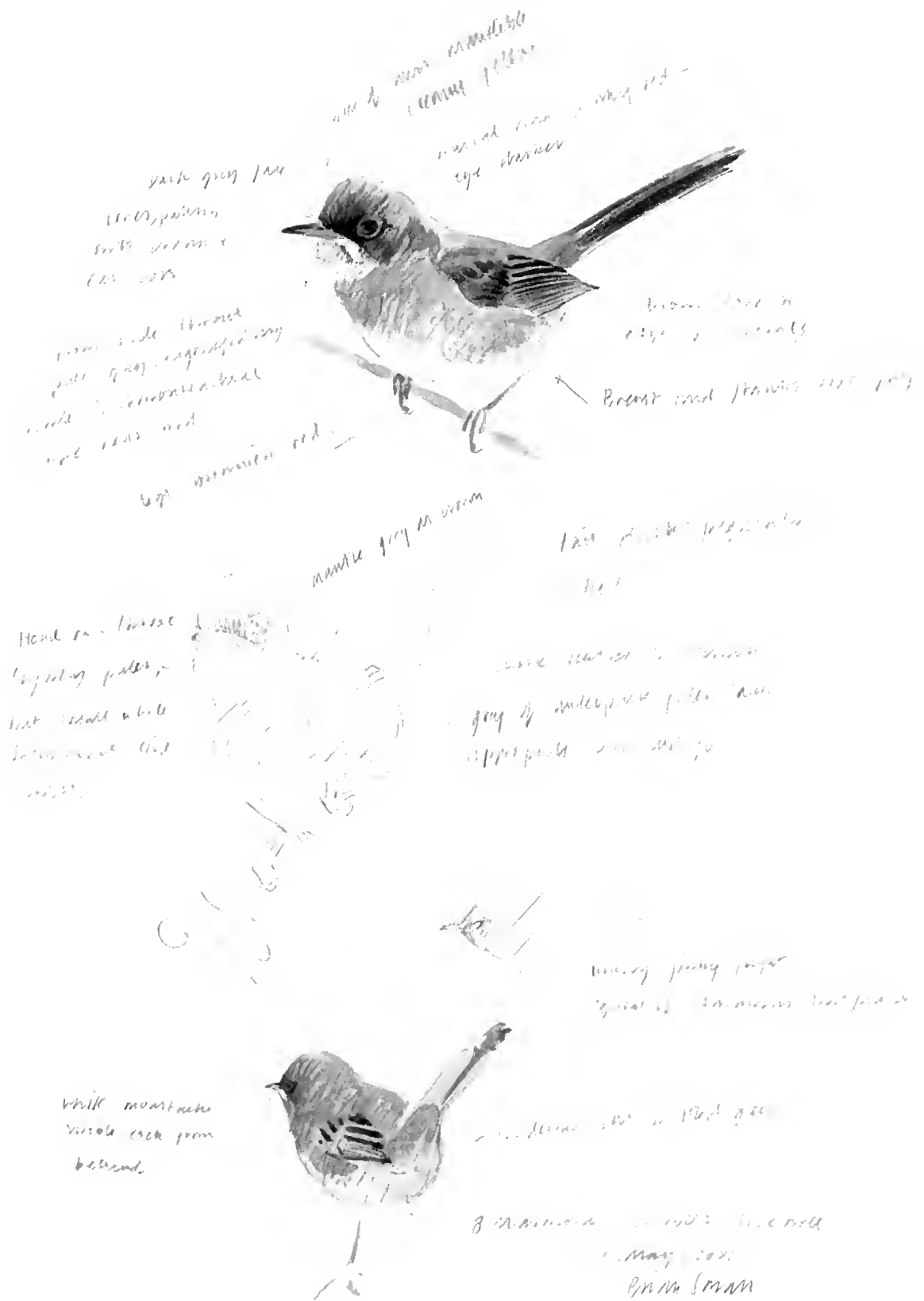


Fig. 7. Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda sarda*, Sizewell, Suffolk, May 2001.

Brian Small

Pembrokeshire Skokholm, C or first-summer F, 2nd-9th April (G. Thompson *et al.*); C or first-winter, 3rd November (T. Purcell, G. Thompson).

Scilly St Mary's, first-winter, 19th to about 28th October, photo. (D. H. Hatton, S. J. Holloway, A. D. Mills *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 351; 95: plate 304). Trecco, C or first-winter, 2nd-3rd November, video. (R. L. Flood *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, C, 22nd-30th May, photo. (P. R. French, D. N. Shaw *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 202). Aith, Fetlar, F, 23rd May (D. Houghton, M. Smith *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Spurn, F, 26th-29th April, photo. (M. G. Stoye *et al.*); F, 3rd May (the late N. A. Bell *et al.*); C, trapped 23rd May (A. J. Gramauskas, P. R. Massey *et al.*).

1997 Devon Lundy, F, trapped 2nd May, photo. (D. Clifton, C. McShane *et al.*).

2000 Suffolk Sizewell, C, freshly dead, 9th November (M. L. Cornish, S. Massey).

2000 Yorkshire, East Spurn, F, 4th September (J. Grist, A. Roadhouse).

(Four races widely but locally distributed throughout Mediterranean basin from NW Africa and Iberia N to S France, and E to Greece and W Turkey. Winters S of Sahel from Mauritania and Senegal to S Egypt and Sudan.)

A good proportion of spring males can be assigned to a particular race with some, but not complete, confidence.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* (1, 55, 3)

Kent St Margaret's, F, 10th-15th April (I. P. Hodgson, D. Wrathall *et al.*).

Norfolk Bacton, C, 20th May (M. Fiszer).

Somerset Brean Down, F, 14th-22nd October (P. Bowyer, P. Chapman, H. Taffs *et al.*).

(Largely resident or dispersive throughout Mediterranean basin, from NW Africa and Iberia to S France, N Italy and E to W Turkey and Israel. Some winter in N Africa from Sahara S to Mauritania and S Libya.)

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* (13, 333, 3)

Dorset Weston, Portland, in song, 1st-2nd July (G. Walbridge *et al.*).

Shetland Out Skerries, 31st August (P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington, P. Sclater). Northdale, Unst, first-winter, trapped 22nd September, photo. (M. G. Pennington).

2000 Angus & Dundee Ethie Mains, 27th-28th August (K. Edwards, R. Shand, G. M. Smith *et al.*).

2000 Shetland Isle of Noss, 1st September (M. Maher, A. Upton).

(The European and W Siberian race *P. t. viridanus* has expanded W during 20th century to E Poland, Baltic countries and S Finland, with sporadic breeding in Germany, Sweden and Norway. To E, breeds through Russia and W Siberia to Yenisei River, S through NW Mongolia to N Afghanistan and NW Himalayas. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent. Other races occur throughout Himalayas to SW China, wintering from Indochina to N Thailand.)

A very poor showing, the worst since 1985.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (19, 223, 2)

Cornwall Nanquidno, 20th-26th October, photo. (J. D. Swann, M. D. Warren, K. A. Wilson *et al.*).

Shetland Sandwick, adult, 15th-16th September (P. M. Ellis, K. Osborn).

2000 Yorkshire, East Spurn, 31st August to 2nd September (D. P. Boyle *et al.*).

(Breeds locally in N Scandinavia, becoming widespread across N Russia E to extreme NE Siberia, S to Baikal region, Ussuriland and NE China. Other races breed in Alaska, and Kamchatka through Kuril Islands to N Japan. Migrant through E China to winter widely in SE Asia to Java, Philippines and Sulawesi.)

Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* (0, 44, 3)

Cornwall Porthgarra, 23rd December (M. D. Wallace, K. A. Wilson).

Dorset Portland Bill, 15th-17th November, trapped 15th, photo. (M. Cade, P. J. Morgan *et al.*).

Northumberland East Chevington, 20th-22nd October, photo. (D. Elliott *et al.*).

2000 Northumberland Tynemouth, 7th-9th November (C. Kehoe *et al.*).

(Breeds in Altai Mountains to W Mongolia, S through Tien Shan and Pamirs to NE Afghanistan, NW Himalayas and mountains in NW China. Winters in S Afghanistan to N India, E to W Bengal. Another race breeds in C China from Shanxi to S Yunnan, W to lower slopes of Tibetan plateau.)

The Northumberland record takes the total for 2000 to ten. The appearance of Hume's Warbler in the field, particularly the brightness of the plumage and strength of wing-bars, is quite variable, so a careful evaluation of any calls is still very important.

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* (1, 221, 13)

Cleveland South Gare, 27th-28th September (J. Regan *et al.*).

Dorset Portland Bill, trapped 24th September, photo. (M. Cade, P. J. Morgan, B. C. Sheldon *et al.*).

Fife Isle of May, 28th September (K. M. Morton *et al.*).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, 25th September (R. F. Porter *et al.*). Happisburgh, 26th September (C. & J. R. Appleton *et al.*).

Northumberland Low Hauxley, 26th September (M. J. Carr). Hauxley, 7th October (I. Fisher, A. S. Hart).

Shetland Fair Isle, 23rd September (T. R. Cleeves, P. R. French, P. R. Gordon *et al.*). Sandwick, 24th September (P. M. Ellis *et al.*). Foula, 25th-26th September (J. M. & T. P. Drew, M. A. Wilkinson *et al.*). Grutness, 14th October (P. M. Ellis *et al.*). Kergord, 14th October (P. V. Harvey).

Yorkshire, East Spurn, trapped, 26th September (P. Day, J. Dixon *et al.*).

2000 Durham South Shields, 14th October (R. Ahmed *et al.*).

(Breeds in S Siberia from Novosibirsk region E to Ussuriland and NE China. Migrates through E China to winter in N Burma, Indochina and C Thailand.)

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (1, 218, 24)

Cleveland Cattersby Gill, Skinningrove, 25th-26th September (N. Jackson, D. A. Money *et al.*).

Cornwall St Levan, 20th-28th October (G. Q. A. Anderson, R. B. Bradbury, S. A. J. Thompson). Sennen, 16th November to end December (M. D. Warren *et al.*).

Dorset Southwell, Portland, 13th-14th October (P. A. Coe, G. Walbridge *et al.*).

Fife Fife Ness, trapped 23rd October, photo. (H. Bell, J. L. S. Cobb, M. Oksien *et al.*).

Kent Reculver, 25th-26th September (F. Smith *et al.*). Dungeness, first-winter, 29th September to 3rd October, trapped 29th, photo. (P. Burness, D. Walker *et al.*). Foreness, 23rd October (R. Boulden).

Lincolnshire Donna Nook, 25th-26th September, photo. (F. J. Maroevic, R. Watts *et al.*).

Norfolk Kelling, 22nd September (M. I. Eldridge). Sea Palling, 22nd September (P. J. Heath). Waxham, at least 26th September (G. J. Etherington, D. Farrow, K. Langdon *et al.*). Winterton, 15th-16th October (P. Cawley *et al.*).

Northeast Scotland Foveran, trapped 20th October, photo. (C. N. Gibbins, R. Rae *et al.*).

Northumberland Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, 22nd-23rd October (S. Sexton, A. Tilmouth *et al.*).

Scilly Bryher, 13th-14th October (D. & J. Bridges *et al.*). Treco, 3rd November (E. A. Fisher, R. L. Flood, E. Webb).

Shetland Fair Isle, 24th September to 4th October, trapped 24th, photo. (P. A. A. Baxter *et al.*). Houll, Fetlar, 19th October (B. Thomason). Uyeasound, Unst, 21st October (P. V. Harvey *et al.*).

Suffolk Southwold, 14th-15th October (R. Walden *et al.*). Landguard, 23rd-29th October, photo. (N. Odin *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 352).

Yorkshire, East Aldbrough, 10th-11th October (J. M. Bayldon, A. F. Johnson, D. R. Middleton *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Ness Point, Whitby, 14th October (B. & J. A. Beaumont, R. S. Slack).

(Breeds in Siberia from Ob River N to 60°N, E to Sea of Okhotsk, S to Russian Altai, N Mongolia and Ussuriland through NE China. Winters Nepal to S China and SE Asia to Singapore. Another race breeds on Tibetan plateau.)

An exceptional year, the best ever, which means that the total number of records of this species remain neck and neck with Radde's Warbler *P. schwarzi*. Although many birders are now familiar with both species we still have problems with descriptions from time to time, and observers are respectfully asked to pay attention to detail, particularly when it comes to describing bare-part structure, subtle colour tones and call.

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus brehmii* (0, 6, 0)

2000 Oxfordshire Great Tew, in song, 27th April to at least 15th May, video., sound-recorded (M. Adkins, I. Dobson, U. Fenton *et al.*).

(Breeds locally in French Pyrenees and S throughout Iberia. N African range restricted to NW Morocco and N Algeria to NW Tunisia. Wintering range in Africa poorly known.)

To date, all British records are of singing birds, and we await the results of further research into the species' biometrics to establish whether there is any other way of identifying Iberian Chiffchaff safely when it is not in song. In the meantime, a recording is a pre-requisite for acceptance.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* (0, 20, 1)

Kent Dungeness, 27th-30th March, photo. (S. Dixon, D. Walker *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 112).

1970 Dorset Pennsylvania Castle, Portland, 23rd November to 21st March 1971 (the late F. R. Clifton, Gunnar Lid, G. Rabol *et al.*); previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 70: 452).

(Widespread resident throughout continental W Europe, from S Spain N to Denmark and E to Poland, W Ukraine and Greece. Elsewhere, resident in mountains of N Africa, W Turkey and W Caucasus.)

The long-staying Dorset bird has now been re-evaluated, 30 years on, and found to be acceptable.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (0, 150, 2)

Norfolk Weybourne, F, 1st April, photo. (M. & M. Preston *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 147).

Sussex, East Icklesham, first-winter, trapped 27th October, photo. (S. Findley, I. Hunter, T. Squire *et al.*).

2000 Dorset Hengistbury Head, age/sex uncertain, 4th November (S. Simmonds).

2000 Suffolk Minsmere, juvenile, 1st November (G. R. Welch).

(Widely but locally distributed throughout C and E Europe, from Denmark, Germany and Italy NE to C Sweden and Estonia. Absent from much of NW Europe but locally numerous in Spain. To E, breeds from S Russia to Volga River. Largely resident or dispersive in Europe. Other races occur in C Asia and from S Siberia to NE China, and winter in Pakistan, S China and S Japan.)

The bird in Norfolk carried a red colour ring, but the source has not yet been identified.

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* (0, 2, 1)

Scilly Bryher, first-winter, 24th-28th September, photo. (per *Surfbirds*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 345).

(Four races breed from Ob River basin E to Sea of Okhotsk and Kamchatka, N Japan, and throughout much of E China. N nominate race winters in Indian subcontinent and throughout SE Asia. Other races winter SE Asia, Philippines, N Borneo and Indonesia.)

Just like buses, Siberian Blue Robins and Black-faced Buntings, you can wait for years and then they all come at once. After the one on Fair Isle in 2000 (not to mention one in Ireland, in Co. Kerry during 1999) comes another, this time on Scilly. This bird was identified retrospectively after it appeared on *Surfbirds* (www.surfbirds.com) labelled as a Red-backed Shrike *L. collurio*. These two are not always the easiest species to separate, particularly first-winters in autumn, and the identification history of this individual would suggest that a fair number may have been overlooked in previous years. The images clearly showed a number of key features though, including the very short outer tail feathers and short primary projection. The bird was relatively pale underneath but with some rather warm colour tones on the upperparts, and particularly the crown, suggesting the nominate race *L. c. cristatus*. As is often the case with racial identification of individual vagrants, however, this is more of an educated guess than a confident statement about its geographical origins.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (1, 56, 3)

Devon Lundy, F, age uncertain, 28th August (P. Davies).

Gloucestershire Cotswold Water Park, first-winter, 28th October, photo. (G. R. Avery, A. D. Hawkins *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, first-winter F, 29th September to 5th October, photo. (S. Message, D. Walker *et al.*).

(Four races breed widely but discontinuously in C Asia, from Caspian Sea and W Iran through

Kazakhstan to Tajikistan, Afghanistan and N Pakistan to S Mongolia and NW China, with isolated population from Zaidam depression to N Tibetan plateau. Winters in NE and E Africa, S Arabian peninsula, S Iran and NW Indian subcontinent.)

BBRC has now completed a review of the racial identity of all records of adults of this species. Birds of this age can often be assigned to race with a high degree of confidence, with records of both *L. i. isabellinus* (formerly *L. i. speculigeris* and sometimes called 'Daurian Shrike') and *L. i. phoenicuroides* (sometimes called 'Turkestan Shrike') determined in the review. The first record of each will now be considered by BOURC for admission to the British List. The majority of British records relate to first-winter birds, however, and it is more difficult to be confident about the taxon involved at this age, though some classic individuals are probably still identifiable. The findings of the review will be published in the near future.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (32, 126, 0)

2000 Shetland Catfirth, first-winter, 12th September (A. Graham).

(European range centred E of Balkans to E Poland, with small numbers W through N Mediterranean to S France and NE Spain. To E, breeds locally from Black Sea coasts, across S Russia and Kazakhstan to extreme NW China and SW Siberia. Migrates through E Africa to winter in S Africa, from Namibia to S Mozambique and N South Africa.)

One in Northeast Scotland remains under review, but this is potentially the first blank year for this species since 1963.

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* (160, 397, 57)

Anglesey Cemlyn Bay, 9th June (J. Buckles *et al.*).

Angus & Dundee Easthaven, 7th-10th June (D. A. Carmichael, P. Gaff, R. McCurley *et al.*). Forfar, 17th July (N. Scott *et al.*).

Ceredigion Llanrhystud, juvenile, 6th October (H. A. Williams *et al.*).

Clyde Islands Kildonan, Arran, adult, 10th September (P. & R. Davies).

Cornwall Kynance Cove, 9th June, photo. (R. Kemp, R. C. Loader). Wadebridge, 10th-14th June, photo. (S. M. Christophers, Mr & Mrs J. Crago *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 203). Helston, adult, 20th-26th August (E. C. & V. James). Launceston, juvenile, 28th October, photo. (B. Craven, D. & S. Wilson). Sennen and Land's End, juvenile, 29th October (M. D. Warren).

Derbyshire Hilton, 19th July, video. (M. Rudge).

Devon Paignton, first-summer, 11th-17th June, photo. (M. & B. P. Vagg). Leemor, 14th June (R. Lillcrap).

Dorset Bridport and Cogden Beach, 15th-18th June (R. Hawkins, B. Hunt, B. Spencer *et al.*). Portland, various localities, juvenile, at least 7th September (G. R. Avery *et al.*).

Hampshire Keyhaven, adult, 3rd September (R. B. Wynn *et al.*); present since 26th August.

Herefordshire Puton, juvenile, 8th-9th November (R. & J. Mellish).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Lytham St Anne's, 6th July (G. & P. Ashworth).

Lincolnshire Chapel St Leonards, juvenile, 30th September, photo. (S. P. Botham, B. Sellars *et al.*) (plate 305).

Norfolk Frettenham, 11th June, photo. (G. Coxall). Waxham, adult, 25th August; juvenile, at least 1st September (R. C. & S. C. McIntyre). Ormesby St Margaret, adult, 27th August (D. S. & L. J. Mullard).

Northeast Scotland Girdleness, 18th June (P. A. A. Baxter *et al.*). St Cyrus, 22nd June (L. Reid, H. I. Scott *et al.*). Pitmedden, first-summer, 13th August (W. Johnston, R. A. Schofield *et al.*); present 10th-15th. Peterculter, juvenile, 23rd November (W. J. Mitchell, G. Rebecca, R. A. Schofield *et al.*); present 15th to at least 25th.

Orkney Quanterness, Mainland, 29th June (L. Inkster).

Outer Hebrides Stinky Bay and Liniclate, Benbecula, adult, 27th July to 4th August, photo. (C. & H. Pelchen *et al.*). Eoligarry, Barra, first-summer, 3rd August (G. Evans *et al.*). New Tolsta, Lewis, first-summer, 10th-15th August, photo. (Mr & Mrs R. Smith, R. D. Weymss). North Loch Eynort, South Uist, adult, 22nd-23rd September (R. H. Hogg, A. Stevenson, R. Vernon).

Pembrokeshire Strumble Head, 17th June (M. Deans, L. Gregory, D. K. Underwood).

Scilly St Mary's, three, 5th June, one to 6th, video. (R. L. Flood *et al.*); juvenile, 28th-31st August,

photo. (R. L. Flood *et al.*). Bryher, 6th-10th July, photo. (R. L. Flood *et al.*); juvenile, 6th October, photo (R. L. Flood); present 23rd September to 26th October. St Agnes, juvenile, 16th-21st September (F. H. D. Hicks *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 16th June (L. Grieve, H. E. Maggs *et al.*); adult, 25th August to 12th September (D. N. Shaw *et al.*). Haroldswick, Unst, 4th-5th July, photo. (M. G. Pennington, C. Vickery *et al.*). Baltasound, Unst, adult, 13th-26th July, trapped 22nd (M. G. Pennington *et al.*). Scalloway, adult, 4th-5th August when killed by cat, photo. (R. A. C. Johnson). Bigton, adult, 12th-15th August, photo. (L. Johnson). Tingwall, adult, 25th August (D. Coutts, I. Sandison). Toab, juvenile, 28th September (P. S. Crockett, K. Gillon, J. R. W. Gordon).

Staffordshire Fradley, Lichfield, 9th-12th June, photo. (B. J. & L. J. Watson *et al.*).

Suffolk Landguard, 12th June (J. Zantboer); juvenile, 16th-17th October (P. Collins, N. Odin *et al.*). Carlton Colville, first-summer, 30th-31st July, photo. (C. Buttle, T. Tarbox *et al.*).

Surrey New Malden, juvenile, 6th October (D. Millington).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, juvenile, 3rd-6th October (J. F. & D. R. Cooper *et al.*).

Sussex, West East Preston, 1st-2nd June (J. Floodgate, Y. B. Smith).

Yorkshire, North Near Murton, 22nd June (B. G. Pepper). Haxby, 30th June (N. & E. N. Moran).

1994 Dorset The Grove, Portland, 8th June (M. Small, D. Walbridge).

1999 Dumfries & Galloway Twynholm, juvenile/first-winter, 22nd November to 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 561), to 21st January (per P. N. Collin).

1999 Suffolk Hollesley, adult, 20th June (*Brit. Birds* 94: 497), observer was R. Johnson.

2000 Devon Lundy, adult, 9th to at least 14th June, photo.; another, 3rd-12th August (L. Cole, D. Kightley, A. J. Parsons *et al.*).

2000 Dumfries & Galloway See 1999 Dumfries & Galloway above.

2000 Essex Colchester, juvenile, 17th-20th October (C. Poole).

2000 Moray & Nairn See 2000 Northeast Scotland below.

2000 Northeast Scotland Buckie, adult, 18th June (*Brit. Birds* 94: 496), actual locality was in Moray & Nairn.

2000 Orkney Rendall, 10th June (I. A. Dillon); present 9th-11th.

2000 Pembrokeshire St David's, 20th-21st June (Mr Jones, L. Lomax, O. Roberts *et al.*).

(Irruptive, regularly reaching SE Europe but only occasional breeder, erratically W to Hungary).



305. Juvenile Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus*, Chapel St Leonards, Lincolnshire, September 2001.

Core breeding range extends from S Ukraine and C Turkey E across S Russia to E Kazakhstan and S through Iran to Afghanistan. Winters throughout India S to Sri Lanka.)

A huge year again, but BBRC members will breathe a mighty sigh of relief that the species was dropped from the rarity list at the end of 2001, just before the third significant summer invasion in a row, in June 2002. Records of this species are usually straightforward to evaluate, and the fuzzy bird-table photographs accompanied by economic but accurate and honest descriptions from inexperienced observers are a feature of the species. Surprisingly, however, there can be pitfalls, even with adults, and an article covering the assessment of records of this species will appear in due course.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* (1, 93, 2)

Cornwall Porthgwarra, 7th-18th October, photo. (I. M. McKercher *et al.*); another, 13th only (M. D. Wallace).

(Breeds throughout S Canada, and USA E of Rocky Mountains. Migrates throughout E USA to winter in N South America. Other races resident in South America.)

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* (30, 757, 9)

Cambridgeshire Woodwalton Fen, 23rd-27th December (R. M. Patient *et al.*).

Norfolk Swanton Novers, 8th January (M. P. Taylor). Titchwell, F, 15th December to 2002, photo. (M. A. Golley, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*); two C C or first-winters, 17th December to 2002 (A. M. Stoddart *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-summer *C. h. exilipes*, 13th-17th May, trapped 15th, photo. (A. J. Bull, P. R. French, D. N. Shaw *et al.*). Near Aith, Fetlar, 11th June (D. Houghton, R. Levett *et al.*). West Yell, Yell, 29th September to 1st October (P. V. Harvey, M. Heubeck). Scatness, F, 18th October (P. M. Ellis).

1995 Yorkshire, West Fairburn Ings, first-winter F, 20th December (G. Taylor); presumed same, 27th-31st (J. Glendinning, G. Taylor).

1996 Yorkshire, West Fairburn Ings, 3rd February to 31st March (J. Glendinning *et al.*).

2000 Outer Hebrides Stilligary, North Uist, 13th December (*Brit. Birds* 94: 498), locality is on South Uist.

(Circumpolar Arctic, with European breeding range restricted to N Scandinavia. Race *C. h. exilipes* breeds on tundra of Arctic Eurasia, Alaska and Canada to Hudson Bay. Nominate race breeds Ellesmere and Baffin Island to N Greenland. Both races disperse S in winter, irregularly reaching NW Europe.)

Shetland continues to dominate. Meanwhile, records from the invasion of 1995/96 still continue to trickle in.

Two-barred Crossbill

Loxia leucoptera (40, 84, 3)

Northumberland Farne Islands, F, 10th July, photo. (T. Sykes *et al.*) (plate 306, page 520).

Shetland Fair Isle, C, 5th-9th July, photo. (H. E. Maggs *et al.*). Peerie Voe, Spiggie, first-summer F, 22nd July (P. V. Harvey, L. & P. Hollinrake, R. Riddington *et al.*) (fig. 8).

(Local resident within larch *Larix* forests of N Eurasia from N Russia to E Siberia, reaching Sea of Okhotsk, and S to Baikal region. Irruptive dispersal leads to irregular breeding in Finland, and very occasionally in Sweden and Norway. Outside breeding season, dispersal occasionally reaches NW Europe. Other races breed across N North America, and Hispaniola.)

Three in July constitutes a mini-influx. These midsummer arrivals tend to appear

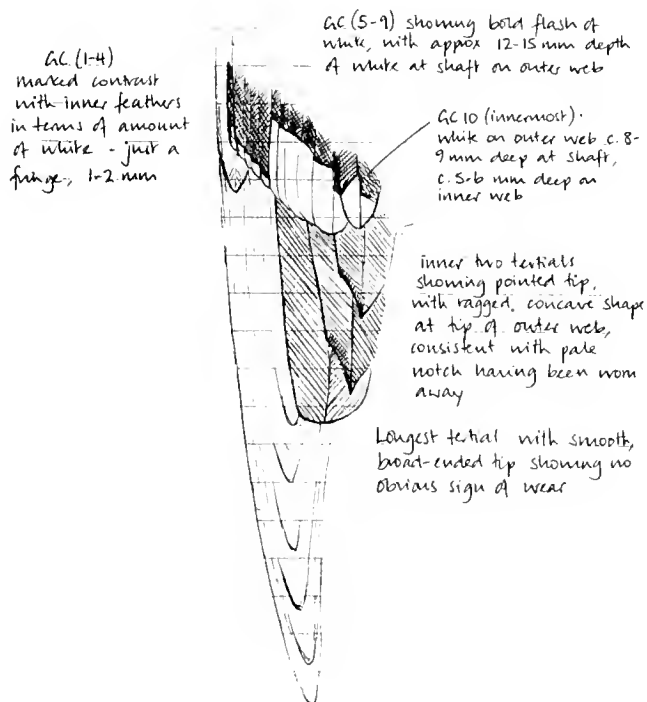


Fig. 8. First-summer male Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera*, Spiggie, Shetland, July 2001.

Roger Riddington

T. Sykes



306. Male Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera*,
Ferne Islands, July 2001.

in treeless places, allowing the good views required in order to secure the identification. They must brighten up a dull July day no end.

Ovenbird

Seiurus aurocapillus (0, 2, 1)

Herefordshire Near Much Marcle, 20th December to 16th February 2002, photo. (observers' names withheld).

(Breeds E North America from SE British Columbia E to Newfoundland and S throughout C and E USA to N Alabama and South Carolina. Winters from Florida and N Mexico S to Panama and West Indies.)

One of the finds of 2001. While clearly intrigued by the bird feeding under the rose bushes beside the resident Robins *Erithacus rubecula* and Hedge Accentors *Prunella modularis* in their garden, the finders quite understandably wanted to keep their private garden private.

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis* (1, 19, 1)

At sea Sea area Dogger, oil installation *Maerske Curlew*, 56°44'N 01°17'E, 6th June, photo. (L. Simpson).

(Breeds North America from SE Yukon E to Newfoundland, S to Great Lakes and N USA to New Jersey. Winters SE USA, from Massachusetts S to Florida, Texas and into N Mexico and California.)

Black-faced Bunting

Emberiza spodocephala (0, 2, 2)

Devon Lundy, 12th October, photo. (S. L. Cooper, R. M. Patient *et al.*) (plate 307).

P. R. French



307. Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala*,
Lundy, Devon, October 2001.

Shetland Fair Isle, 20th-24th October, photo. (P. R. French *et al.*).

(Breeds from Russian Altai and Ob River E across Siberia to Sea of Okhotsk, S to Baikal region, N Mongolia, Amurland, N Korean peninsula and extreme NE China. Winters South Korea and through much of E China to Hong Kong. Other races breed in Japan and C China.)

One in winter/spring 1994, one in October 1999, a spring bird in 2000 and now two in October 2001: Black-faced Buntings are suddenly becoming common! There is no problem with the identification of the male on Spurn in May 2000 but, given the bird's condition, doubts have been expressed about its origins. As such, the record is effectively still pending and is not included in the statistics.

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* (34, 396, 10)

Norfolk Winterton, 24th September (J. R. Appleton *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Grimsay, F, 10th June (K. Macleod, M. Price).

Shetland Baltasound, Unst, F, 12th May; presumed same, Haroldswick, 15th (S. E. Duffield). Fair Isle, F, 15th May (H. E. Maggs *et al.*); 28th September to 7th October, photo. (P. A. A. Baxter, B. Orr, H. I. Scott *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 324); 30th September to at least 1st October (C. Scott, H. I. Scott *et al.*). Out Skerries, 22nd-23rd September, photo. (P. Forrest, M. J. McKee) (plate 308). Foula, 27th September (J. M. & T. P. Drew, M. A. Wilkinson). Fetlar, 30th September to 1st October (P. V. Harvey, B. Thomason).

Yorkshire, North Filey, F, 26th to at least 31st March, photo. (H. J. Whitehead *et al.*).

1999 Orkney North Ronaldsay, 1st October (*Brit. Birds* 93: 563), now considered inadequately documented.

2000 Durham Marsden, 21st October (R. Ahmed *et al.*).

2000 Shetland Hoswick, 23rd-25th September (P. S. Crockett, R. A. Mavor *et al.*).

(Breeds in boreal forest mires of N Eurasia from Sweden and Finland, E across N Russia to easternmost Siberia and Kamchatka, and S to Baikal region. European population migrates SE to winter in E China, Korean peninsula and S Japan.)



Michael McKee

308. Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*, Out Skerries, Shetland, September 2001.

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* (10, 199, 3)

Scilly St Agnes, C or first-winter, 5th-9th October, photo. (A. Disley, D. Page *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 353; 95: plate 309, page 522).

Shetland Fair Isle, C or first-winter, 29th-30th August, photo. (H. E. Maggs *et al.*). Skaw, Unst, C or first-winter, 29th August to 2nd September (J. N. Dymond *et al.*).

2000 Shetland Isle of Noss, C or first-winter, 27th August (M. Maher, A. Upton).

2000 Yorkshire, East Spurn, C or first winter, 3rd September, photo. (J. T. Harriman).

(European range restricted to small and declining population in C Finland, centred on Gulf of Bothnia. To E, breeds widely across Russia and Siberia to Kamchatka, S to NE China and NE Hokkaido. Winters locally from E Nepal through Himalayan foothills to NE India, and widely throughout SE Asia.)

The individual on Spurn in 2000 was a very unusual bird, with heavy and coarse markings that generated considerable debate. Although the overall appearance of the bird did not comply with our usual image of the species in autumn at any age, the individual details of the plumage were all consistent with Yellow-breasted Bunting. After considerable discussion and consultation, the conclusion was that it could only relate to this species. The potential for individual variation in a species is often underestimated. No matter how good the illustrations are in the book, there are always some individuals that do not quite match.



309. Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*, St Agnes, Scilly, October 2001.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* (9, 151, 4)

Anglesey South Stack, F, 18th-20th May, video., photo. (K. G. Croft, S. Culley *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Freshwater West, near Castle Martin, F, 16th May (N. & L. Baker).

Shetland Fair Isle, F, 16th June (C. C. Rodger *et al.*); C, 11th-26th September, trapped 11th, 15th, photo. (R. Nowicki, D. N. Shaw *et al.*).

1994 Pembrokeshire Skomer, F, age uncertain, 8th May (P. Goddard *et al.*).

2000 Highland Creag Meadgaith Nature Reserve, Badenoch & Strathspey, F, 15th June (P. Duncan).

2000 Merionydd Aber Dysynni, F, 25th-28th June (A. & P. Gaunt).

(Breeds from C Italy to Greece, Turkey, N Iraq and W Iran, N through Caucasus to Ukraine and S Russia. Winters in W and C India.)



310. First winter Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Phoenicurus ludovicianus*, Lundy, Devon, October 2001

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus* (0, 18, 2)

Devon Lundy, first-winter F, 6th-9th October, photo. (S. L. Cooper, R. M. Patient *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 354; 95: plate 310).

Scilly St Martin's, first-winter F, 13th-14th October, photo. (T. J. Humpage, M. A. Warburton *et al.*).

(Breeds C Canada to Nova Scotia and through mid-west and NE USA to Maryland. Migrates through E states to winter from C Mexico through C America to N South America.)

These are the first since 1998 and are a welcome return.

Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* (0, 21, 2)

Devon Prawle Point, first-winter, 9th-15th October, photo. (P. M. Mayer *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 94: plate 355; 95: plate 311).

Yorkshire, East Long Bank, Easington, age uncertain, 27th October, photo. (J. Law, R. Swales *et al.*).

(Breeds widely across S Canada and N USA, S to NE California and New Jersey. Winters Peru to S Brazil and N Argentina.)

Exceptional away from the far west, the one at Easington was the first for Yorkshire.



311. First-winter Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*, Prawle Point, Devon, October 2001.

Appendix 1. Category D species accepted (see *Ibis* 136: 253)

White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*

Herefordshire/Radnorshire Near Hay-on-Wye, 23rd October (A. & I. Evans).

(In Europe, breeding confined to a handful of sites, with Danube delta, Romania holding about half of entire Palearctic population. Small numbers breed in Greece, Russia and occasionally Ukraine. Elsewhere, breeds locally in Turkey, Volga delta and throughout C Asia. Northern breeders migratory, thought to winter in E Africa. Asian populations winter in Indus delta, Pakistan, and NW India. Other populations breed locally in E and South Africa).

One of the problems with some Category D species, particularly obvious ones like pelicans, is that sometimes the description does not exclude similar species which may possibly escape. Frequently, descriptions of pelicans go out of their way to exclude both Dalmatian *P. crispus* and Pink-backed Pelicans *P. rufescens* but do not consider the problem of escaped American White Pelican *P. erythrorhyn-*

chos. Difference in the pattern of the primary coverts, bill colour and the amount of contrast in the wing all hold good, irrespective of the time of year, while the lump on the bill of a breeding male American White Pelican helps identification in summer.

Baikal Teal *Anas formosa*

Suffolk Minsmere, first-winter F, 18th November to 29th December, photo. (P. Green, W. Miles *et al.*) (plates 12, 312).

(Breeds in E Siberia, from Yenisei River E to Anadyr' and Kamchatka, N to 70°N, although breeding range believed to have contracted in recent years. Much of population now winters in South Korea, with small numbers regular in E China and S Japan).

Back in the 1960s and 1970s, Baikal Teal was considered a very difficult bird to keep and breed in captivity. Things have changed substantially and, in the 2001 census, it was the fifth most common waterfowl in captivity, based upon the number of keepers. Consequently, perceptions of the likelihood of escape may need to be revised for this species. Unfortunately, the age of the bird is not a particularly helpful pointer to its origins. Although first-year birds are the most likely vagrants, they are also the most likely to escape, since most adult waterfowl in breeding collections are pinioned. It is interesting, however, that 30% of European records have occurred during November.



Steve Young/Birdwatch

312. First-winter male Baikal Teal *Anas formosa*, Minsmere, Suffolk, November 2001.

Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris*

Suffolk Minsmere, two adults, 13th-15th October, photo. (N. Calbrade, P. Green, W. Miles *et al.*).

(Small population breeds in Morocco and S Spain, latter now c. 100 pairs. Elsewhere, breeds locally in Turkey, Azerbaijan and Armenia, E to Iraq and N to S Kazakhstan. Migratory and dispersive outside breeding season. Many Spanish breeders move to Ebro delta, NE Spain, in late summer. Some winter in N Africa, with small numbers reaching Senegal, Mali and Chad. Asian population mostly winters in Iran).

There are records of Marbled Duck in most years, and who can say whether they are escapes or not. There has been a dramatic population decline in the twentieth century but numbers have apparently increased in Britain. This may, however, be due to better observer coverage. While their appearance well to the north of the breeding range may seem unusual, numbers do disperse when wetlands dry out in summer and they occur quite regularly in northern Spain in late summer (*BWP*). Vagrants from the eastern part of the range might be regarded as more likely to occur in late autumn but we will probably need a ringing recovery or a major and sustained change in status for this species to be accepted on to Category A.

Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus*

2000 Outer Hebrides Oban Trumisgarry and Voiskinish, North Uist, age/sex uncertain, 23rd October to 1st November, video. (G. Evans, B. Rabbits, A. Stevenson *et al.*).

(Breeds from S Alaska, E across S Canada and N USA to Newfoundland, and S to Oregon, Virginia and locally almost to Gulf coast. Winters coastally, from S limit of breeding range to California and Florida).

With the expanding range of this species in North America, there is bound to be recurrent questioning of the place of Hooded Merganser on Category D. The arguments and counter-arguments have already been discussed (e.g. *Birding World* 13: 506-517), with location and age being the principal points of discussion. The presence of a presumed first-year bird at an east-coast site this year will fuel the debate further.

Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus*

1999 Kent St Margaret's, 28th September (J. R. Chantler, D. Wrathall); also in other counties in 1999/2000, below.

1999 Cornwall Porthgwarra and Drift Reservoir area, 26th October to 6th November, probably since 23rd (S. M. Christophers, A. J. Harris *et al.*); same, Marazion, 8th-9th November, Tremethick Cross, 11th (D. S. Flumm *et al.*); same as 1999 Kent.

2000 Avon Chew Valley Lake area, 11th-12th February, photo. (A. Britton, Mr & Mrs R. M. Curber *et al.*); same as 1999 Kent.

2000 Kent Dungeness, 7th April (R. J. Price); same, Cliffe, 8th (P. Larkin, R. O'Reilly); same as 1999 Kent.

2000 Orkney North Ronaldsay, 22nd June (P. J. Donnelly); same as 1999 Kent.

2000 Somerset Avalon Marshes, 6th-9th February, probably since 2nd, photo. (J. A. Hazell *et al.*); same as 1999 Kent.

(Breeds widely throughout Iberia and C France, and locally E throughout Mediterranean basin from N Africa to Balkans, Greece, Turkey, Caucasus states and Ukraine, and N to Poland. W Palearctic population winters from sub-Saharan Africa to South Africa. Elsewhere, breeds throughout C Asia to Lake Baikal region, Mongolia and extreme NE China, S to Iran and Afghanistan, and winters in Indian subcontinent.)

For many people this was the highlight of the 1999/2000 winter, despite its place now on Category D. Given the increasing frequency of large raptors in the Low Countries, it seems only a matter of time before an acceptable bird is seen in circumstances which do not cast some doubt on its origins. The reasons for the decision on this individual have already been discussed by BOURC (www.bou.org.uk).

Appendix 2. List of records not accepted

This list contains all current records not accepted after circulation to the Committee. It does not include a) those withdrawn by the observer(s) without circulation, after discussion with the Hon. Secretary; b) those which, even if circulated, were not attributed by the observer(s) to any definite species; c) those mentioned in 'Recent reports' in *British Birds* if full details were unobtainable; or d) certain escapes.

In the vast majority of cases, the record was not accepted because we were not convinced that the identification was fully established; only in a very few cases were we satisfied that a mistake had been made.

2001 White-billed Diver Hornsea, East Yorkshire, 8th May; Tiumpan Head, Lewis, Outer Hebrides, 12th May; Annstead Point, Northumberland, 17th September. Sooty Albatross *Phoebetria fusca* 5 km SE of Ramsey Sound, Pembrokeshire, 30th August. Little Shearwater Pendeen, Cornwall, 30th August; St Ives, Cornwall, 9th October. White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina* 3 km W of Cemaes Head, Pembrokeshire, 19th August. Squacco Heron West Bexington, Dorset, 30th April. Great White Egret Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire, 18th March; Cliffe, Kent, 13th April; West Sedgemoor, Somerset, 3rd May; Ikencliff, Suffolk, two, 18th May; Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire, 10th, 13th August; Penrhos, Anglesey, 24th October. Black Stork Blakeney, Norfolk, 10th October. 'Black Brant' West Runton, Norfolk, 21st October. Red-breasted Goose Bexhill, East Sussex, 3rd February. American Wigeon Tregaron, Ceredigion, 12th January; Loch Mor, Colonsay, Argyll, 14th April. Ferruginous Duck Gosforth, Northumberland, 10th June. Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus* R. Dyfi near Glandyfi and William Condry Reservoir, Montgomeryshire, 25th February. Common Scoter *M. n. americana* St Andrew's, Fife, 27th January. Hooded Merganser Leverburgh, Outer Hebrides, 20th

April. **Black Kite** Near Brecon, Breconshire, 15th April; Stanpit Marsh, Dorset, 15th April; St Mary's, Scilly, 20th April; Horsey, Norfolk, 26th April; March, Cambridgeshire, 8th May; Warlingham, Surrey, 24th May; Isle of Dogs, Greater London, 25th May; Winteringham, Lincolnshire, 26th May; Ventnor, Isle of Wight, 3rd June; Kilfinichan Bay, Mull, Argyll, 17th July; Flitcham, Norfolk, 18th August; Paignton, Devon, 19th September. **Pallid Harrier** Kenfig, Glamorgan, 3rd November; Spurn, East Yorkshire, 4th November. **Red-footed Falcon** Beachy Head, East Sussex, 30th April; Grimley Old Workings, Worcestershire, 15th May; Robertsbridge, East Sussex, 16th May; Trowell, Nottinghamshire, 13th June. **Gyr Falcon** Owston Ferry, Lincolnshire, 26th January. **Little Crake** Kenfig, Glamorgan, 5th November. **Black-winged Pratincole** Goodrich, Herefordshire, 19th July. **American Golden Plover** Hirta, St Kilda, Outer Hebrides, 30th September to 3rd October. **Semipalmated Plover** *Charadrius semipalmatus* Peninerine and Howmore Estuary, South Uist, Outer Hebrides, 16th-17th September. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** Chichester Gravel-pits, West Sussex, 25th August. **White-rumped Sandpiper** Inverugie, Northeast Scotland, 23rd April. **Great Snipe** Fazakerley, Lancashire & North Merseyside, 17th February; Ellerton, East Yorkshire, 4th April; North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 25th August; Out Skerries, Shetland, 30th September to 1st October. **Dowitcher** sp. Hornsea, East Yorkshire, 14th December. **Lesser Yellowlegs** Loch of Strathbeg, Northeast Scotland, 15th September. **Bonaparte's Gull** Seaforth, Lancashire & North Merseyside, 15th July. **Kelp Gull** *Larus dominicanus* Dungeness, Kent, 16th July. **Ross's Gull** Reculver, Kent, 11th January; Whitstable, Kent, 28th January. **Gull-billed Tern** Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, 21st July; Fife Ness, Fife, 23rd September. **Caspian Tern** Winterton, Norfolk, 25th April. **Sooty Tern** *Sterna fuscata* 4 km W of Lundy, Devon, 5th June; Aldringham, Suffolk, 23rd August. **Whiskered Tern** Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire, 2nd September; Irvine, Ayrshire, 17th October. **White-winged Black Tern** Meare Heath, Somerset, 17th September. **Alpine Swift** Eastbourne, East Sussex, 24th March; Farnborough, Hampshire, 12th May; Bexhill, East Sussex, 1st July; Cawood, North Yorkshire, 7th October. **Pallid Swift** St Agnes, Scilly, 3rd June; Beachy Head, East Sussex, 22nd September; Gribbin Head, Cornwall, 21st October. **Little Swift** Lunan Bay, Angus & Dundee, 11th May; Pett Level, East Sussex, 27th May. **European Roller** Andoverford, Gloucestershire, 16th July; Mount Edgecombe Country Park, Cornwall, 20th July. **Red-rumped Swallow** St Mary's, Scilly, 29th May; Porthgwarra, Cornwall, 2nd November. **Cliff Swallow** Sandwich Bay, Kent, 4th November. **Olive-backed Pipit** Out Skerries, Shetland, 29th-30th September. **Red-throated Pipit** Out Skerries, Shetland, 27th September. **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava feldegg* Calow, Derbyshire, 26th May; Farne Islands, Northumberland, 16th June. **Citrine Wagtail** Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire, 30th July. **Common Stonechat** *S. t. maura* Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, 15th March; St Agnes, Scilly, 6th October; Huntsham, Devon, 24th October. **Siberian Thrush** *Zoothera sibirica* Tregaron Bog, Ceredigion, 26th February. **Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis* Strumble Head, Pembrokeshire, 24th August. **Lanceolated Warbler** Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk, 19th September. **Savi's Warbler** Farlington Marshes, Hampshire, 29th September; Combe Haven, East Sussex, 27th October. **Booted Warbler** St Mary's, Scilly, 25th August; St Martin's, Scilly, 14th-15th October. **Sardinian Warbler** Farne Islands, Northumberland, 20th August. **Hume's Warbler** Woodford Green, Greater London, 19th November to 26th December. **Western Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli* Nantfyllon, Maesteg, Glamorgan, 28th-29th August. **Western/Eastern Bonelli's Warbler** *P. bonelli/orientalis* Manorbier, Pembrokeshire, 16th July. **Iberian Chiffchaff** Bembridge, Isle of Wight, 29th July to 25th August. **Asian Brown Flycatcher** *Muscicapa dauurica* Out Skerries, Shetland, 24th September. **Rosy Starling** Torpoint, Devon, 6th January; Borth, Ceredigion, 10th August; Helston, Cornwall, juvenile, 26th October to 25th November. **Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes githagineus* Rackwick Glen, Hoy, Orkney, 31st October. **Evening Grosbeak** *Hesperiphona vespertina* Walton on the Naze, Essex, 21st October. **Northern Parula** *Parula americana* Torside Clough, Derbyshire, 13th October. **House Bunting** *Emberiza striolata* Kenfig, Glamorgan, 8th April. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 21st October. **Baltimore Oriole** *Icterus galbula* Horsley, Gloucestershire, 9th May.

2000 **White-billed Diver** Ness Point, Whitby, North Yorkshire, 3rd September. **Southern Giant Petrel** *Macronectes giganteus* Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, 16th August. **Night Heron** Ventnor Down, Isle of Wight, 25th January; Stocksbridge, South Yorkshire, 10th May. **Great White Egret** Hartshill, Warwickshire, 28th May; Runcorn, Cheshire, 28th June. **'Black Brant'** Colne Point, Essex, 24th-25th November. **American Wigeon** Seaton Gravel-pits, Kent, 5th-6th February; Kinnaber, Northeast Scotland, 21st May; Loch Spynie, Moray & Nairn, 29th November. **Lesser Scaup** Farnoor, Oxfordshire, 24th March.

Black Kite North Warren, Suffolk, 14th April; Forest Row, East Sussex, 6th June. Booted Eagle Prawle Point, Devon, 12th March. Red-footed Falcon Wimbledon Park, Surrey, 14th May. Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug* Combe Haven, East Sussex, 23rd September. Broad-billed Sandpiper Nosterfield, North Yorkshire, 15th-16th September. Great Snipe North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 24th September; Fazakerley, Lancashire & North Merseyside, 18th-21st November; Doxey Marshes, Staffordshire, 19th November. Marsh Sandpiper Snettisham, Norfolk, three, 6th May. Lesser Yellowlegs Nosterfield, North Yorkshire, 26th July. Spotted Sandpiper Steart, Somerset, 31st August to 3rd September. Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* Holyhead area, Anglesey, 6th December. White-winged Black Tern Queen Mother Reservoir, Berkshire, two, 7th May; Llangorse Lake, Breconshire, 17th September. Common Nighthawk *Chordeiles minor* Nympsfield, Gloucestershire, 1st October. Alpine Swift Nanjizal, Cornwall, 10th May. Red-rumped Swallow Beachy Head, East Sussex, 19th June. Red-throated Pipit Goldcliff Pill, Gwent, 24th September; Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, 29th September. Yellow Wagtail *M. f. feldegg* Ripon, North Yorkshire, 12th May. Citrine Wagtail Lymington, Hampshire, 12th October. Thrush Nightingale North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 1st-2nd September. American Robin *Turdus migratorius* Prestwood, Buckinghamshire, 14th December. Savi's Warbler Darsham Marsh, Suffolk, 18th May. Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus fuscus* Rostherne Mere, Cheshire, 2nd September. Booted Warbler Shoeburyness, Essex, 19th September; Brora, Highland, 28th September; Scarborough, North Yorkshire, 28th September. Western Bonelli's Warbler New Forest, Hampshire, 15th May. Western/Eastern Bonelli's Warbler Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, 30th April. Penduline Tit Farnborough, Hampshire, 12th October. Rosy Starling Out Skerries, Shetland, 18th August. Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* Isle of Noss, Shetland, 14th September.

1999 Little Shearwater St Mary's, Scilly, 18th September. American Wigeon Gwent Levels, Gwent, 28th-30th September. Blue-winged Teal St Mary's, Scilly, F, 26th October. Red-footed Falcon Gaywood/King's Lynn, Norfolk, 3rd June. American Golden Plover Wrangle Marsh, Lincolnshire, 17th July. Oriental Lark *Alauda gulgula* Stronsay, Orkney, at least 22nd October. Yellow Wagtail *M. f. feldegg* Maylandsea, Essex, 24th May to 24th June. Common Stonechat *S. t. naaura* Spurn, East Yorkshire, 16th September. Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva albicilla* St Agnes, Scilly, 6th-10th October.

1998 Blue-winged Teal Bough Beech Reservoir, Kent, 29th March. Lesser Scaup Ham Road Gravel-pits, Kent, 17th December to 2nd January 1999. Black Kite Hill Head, Hampshire, 30th April. Isabelline Wheatear Bryher, Scilly, 29th October to 1st November. Reed Warbler *A. s. fuscus* Fife Ness, Fife, 1st October; Beachy Head, East Sussex, 3rd October.

1997 Red-throated Pipit St Mary's, Scilly, 10th October; Porthgwarra, Cornwall, 22nd-23rd October.

1996 American Golden Plover Witham Mouth, Lincolnshire, 10th March; same, Butterwick Marsh, 24th.

1995 Blyth's Pipit St Mary's, Scilly, 9th-10th October. Arctic Redpoll North Ronaldsay, Orkney, further individual, 8th December.

1994 Alpine Swift St Osyth, Essex, 3rd May.

1993 Red-necked Stint Blacktoft Sands, East Yorkshire, at least 5th August.

1992 Reed Warbler *A. s. fuscus* Hartlepool Headland, Cleveland, 26th September.

1987 Rustic Bunting St Martin's, Scilly, 23rd April.

Appendix 3. List of records not accepted but identification proved

This list provides a permanent record of those occurrences which, usually on the grounds of likely escape from captivity, find no place in any category, but which may, at some future date, merit further consideration. It does not include (a) any record of a species for which natural vagrancy is wholly unlikely, or (b) those records of presumed escapes already mentioned in the main text of this or earlier reports.

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* Walthamstow Reservoirs, Essex/Greater London, C or immature, 11th September 1999; probably same, 20th February 2000.

Appendix 4. List of selected records still under consideration

This list is not intended to be complete. Some decisions may have been arrived at and notified to County Recorders/observers prior to the publication of this report.

2001 White-billed Diver Rerwick Point, Tankerness, Orkney, 30th April. Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel Berry Head, Devon, 17th July; Hopes Nose, Devon, 17th July; Walney Island, Cumbria, 22nd July; Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, 23rd September. Night Heron Chew Valley Lake, Avon, 10th May; Brandon Marsh, Warwickshire, 13th May. Lesser Scaup Loch an Eilean, South Uist, Outer Hebrides, 27th January; Wilstone Reservoir, Hertfordshire, 4th-7th November. Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* Pegwell Bay, Kent, 15th August; Grove Ferry, Kent, 30th August. Forster's Tern Tingwall and Eynhallow Sound area, Orkney, 24th-27th October. Little Swift Off Porthcurno, Cornwall, 24th May. Citrine Wagtail Callernish, North Uist, Outer Hebrides, 31st August. Blyth's Reed Warbler Locality withheld, Greater London, 6th-28th October. Booted Warbler Netherstone, Deerness, Orkney, 20th August. Lesser Grey Shrike Girdle Ness, Northeast Scotland, 10th October. Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* Filey, North Yorkshire, 3rd March.

2000 White-billed Diver Dungeness, Kent, 30th April. Canvasback Loch of Rummie, Sanday, Orkney, 21st-23rd June. Gyr Falcon Goonhilly Downs, Cornwall, 3rd March; Cape Cornwall, Cornwall, 5th-23rd March; Dava Moor, Moray & Nairn, 19th March. Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei* Cley, Norfolk, 22nd May (*Brit. Birds* 94: 503-504). Dark-throated Thrush *T. r. atrogularis* Foula, Shetland, 23rd September. Iberian Chiffchaff Portland Bill, Dorset, 11th May; Bardsey, Caernarfonshire, 2nd October (*Brit. Birds* 94: 504). Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* Bardsey, Caernarfonshire, 26th September (*Brit. Birds* 94: 504).

1998 'Wilson's Snipe' *Gallinago (gallinago) delicata* St Mary's, Scilly, 9th October to 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 504).

1997 'Wilson's Snipe' St Mary's, Scilly, 19th October (*Brit. Birds* 94: 504).

1996 South Polar Skua Dawlish Warren, Devon, January, February; presumed same, West Bexington, Dorset, January, February (*Brit. Birds* 94: 504).

1993 South Polar Skua Sea area Sole, 26th August (*Brit. Birds* 94: 504).

1962 Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* St Agnes, Scilly, 30th September to 2nd October (*Brit. Birds* 94: 504).

1961 Olivaceous Warbler St Agnes, Scilly, 3rd-4th October (*Brit. Birds* 94: 504).



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Looking back

Fifty years ago:

'Jays and Magpies eating wasps.—In reference to the notes on reactions of birds eating wasps (*Brit. Birds* 44: 406-407) it seems worth recording that my captive Jays (*Garrulus glandarius*) eat wasps readily, and I have no doubt wild Jays do likewise when they get the opportunity. The Jay bites hard as it seizes the wasp, thus disabling it. It then quickly puts it down and bites the rear end of the abdomen hard several times. After this the wasp is eaten without further precautions. No attempt is made to remove the sting, but presumably this treatment renders it harmless by rup-

turing the poison gland and dispersing its contents. This behaviour is innate: two juvenile Jays that had never seen wasps before treated them in the same manner as experienced birds.

The stomach of a Magpie (*Pica pica*) found—in company, *inter alia*, with Barn-Owls (*Tyto alba*)—on a keeper's gibbet in winter, contained, besides a quantity of barley, three queen wasps (*Vespa? s. p.*) so in all probability this bird is also a wasp-eater. DEREK GOODWIN. (*Brit. Birds* 45: 364, October 1952)

[It is good to see that, fifty years later, Derek Goodwin is still contributing lively notes to *BB*—see p. 532. Eds]

Conservation research news

Compiled by Len Campbell, Ken Smith, Britt Cordi and Jeremy Wilson



Are nestboxes always of benefit to breeding birds?

The provision of nestboxes in habitats where natural nesting cavities are believed to be limited is widely used as a means of increasing the numbers of breeding pairs of scarce or declining species. High nestbox-occupancy rates are frequently achieved and this may be taken on its own as a sign of success. The possibility that nestboxes may simply attract pairs which would otherwise have nested undetected elsewhere is, however, often overlooked. Similarly, density-dependent effects are often ignored and it is assumed that increased breeding numbers inevitably lead to increased productivity.

A study carried out in Finland (Poysa & Poysa 2002) has assessed the effect of a four-fold increase in the number of nestboxes on the number of pairs of nesting Common Goldeneyes *Bucephala clangula* in an experimental area. A control area, which maintained the same number of nestboxes throughout the 12-year study period, was also surveyed. The number of breeding pairs, estimated using a standard point-count method rather than just a count of

nests found, increased significantly in the experimental area but remained unchanged within the control. The authors also compared reproductive output in the experimental area before and after the extra nestboxes were provided. Despite the increase in the number of breeding pairs, there was no increase in the mean number of broods or fledged young per lake. Thus, although nest sites appeared to have been limiting the size of the breeding population, density-dependent factors, for example competition with other goldeneyes, or predation, were limiting reproductive success. The apparently beneficial effect of extra nestboxes was negated by these factors, and this is, therefore, another example which stresses the importance of a broad understanding of a species' population ecology before embarking on specific management measures.

Poysa, H., & Poysa, S. 2002. Nest-site limitation and density dependence of reproductive output in the Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*: implications for the management of cavity-nesting birds. *J. Appl. Ecol.* 39: 502-510.

Swedish Great Bitterns boom

In the mid 1990s a small group of RSPB staff visited reedbed sites in Denmark and Sweden to look at habitat management for Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* and meet some of the key workers. Inspired by what they saw, the visit provided the catalyst for some of the management at sites in the UK that has led to the recent revival in Great Bittern numbers here.

One of the key people the group met was Lars Broberg, an amateur birdwatcher who probably knows more about Great Bitterns than anybody: he has studied his population at Lake

Mälaren for more than 30 years. Lars has recently published the results of his latest survey of breeding Great Bitterns in Sweden (Broberg 2002), the third such survey he has organised. Numbers are now as high as they have ever been, with 652 males found in 2000, compared with 189 in 1969 and 275 in 1979.

Many factors are likely to be involved in this spectacular increase. Great Bitterns are notoriously difficult to count, so improved coverage in recent years will account for some of the increase. The recent run of warm winters in

northwest Europe will also have been important; although most Great Bitterns leave Sweden in winter, the number returning is lower following hard weather in their wintering areas. Habitat improvement is likely to be a major factor benefiting the species. There are many sites in Sweden where reedbed habitat work has been undertaken. For instance, at Lake Hornborgasjön, a large, dry reedbed has been converted to a reed-fringed lake and bittern numbers have increased from one or two males to 11 males. It is also likely that subtle change in

the management of reedbed fringes is benefiting the species.

Whatever the cause, this is fantastic news. With Great Bittern numbers increasing in Denmark and Finland, as well as in Sweden, it is perhaps not surprising that the number of birds wintering in the UK is rising too. Perhaps the increased availability of wintering habitat in the UK may also be helping Scandinavian breeders.

Broberg, L. 2002. Rördrommen i Sverige – Resultat av Riksinventeringen 2000. *Vår Fågelvärld* 2: 6-13.

Why do waders avoid nesting on slopes?

Several studies of upland-nesting waders have shown that sloping ground is shunned for nesting, but a recent study (Whittingham *et al.* 2002) is the first to investigate the possible mechanisms underlying this phenomenon.

Mark Whittingham and his colleagues looked at 66 European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* nest scrapes on heather moorland in the Teesdale National Nature Reserve during a five-year study period. They found that golden plovers strongly favoured flat ground. The majority of nests were on terrain with an average slope of just 0-1°, whereas randomly selected points had a mean slope of 3° in one study plot and 7° in another. Nests on slopes exceeding 5° were extremely rare. Over half of such nesting attempts failed, and almost all (95%) of these failures could be attributed to egg predation, particularly by Stoats *Mustela erminea*. Although nest survival rates did not vary with habitat type or with measures of vegetation height or density around the nest, they were significantly higher on flat ground (with a 41% chance of the eggs surviving to hatch) than on slopes of 2° or more (only a 15% chance of surviving to hatch).

So, it seems that golden plovers may well select plateaux because eggs are more likely to hatch in nests on flatter ground. But why should this be so? First, it is possible that habitat structure differs between flat and sloping ground, such that nests on open ground

are more conspicuous to predators. Yet no significant differences in vegetation structure immediately around nests were found when comparing nests on flat ground with those on slopes. Second, it is possible that approaching predators are more visible on flat ground than on slopes, making it easier for parents to detect predators and employ distraction behaviours. This accords with the tendency of golden plovers to nest in short vegetation, but to site the nest in the tops of tussocks. A third possibility is that plateaux are in some other respects a higher-quality habitat (e.g. they may provide better foraging opportunities for chicks in marshy ground) and, consequently, more experienced or higher-quality birds, better able to compete for territorial space and to evade predators, prevail in securing sites on flatter ground. This study does not allow us to establish which of these explanations is correct, although the second and third hypotheses, or indeed some combination of the two, seem most likely. European Golden Plovers and other waders probably avoid nesting on slopes for reasons connected with predation risk, but more work is needed to understand exactly what mechanisms are involved.

Whittingham, M. J., Percival, S. M., & Brown, A. F. 2002. Nest-site selection by Golden Plover: why do shorebirds avoid nesting on slopes? *J. Avian Biol.* 33: 184-190.

Len Campbell, Ken Smith, Britt Cordi and Jeremy Wilson, Conservation Science Department, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL

This feature, contributed by the RSPB's Research Department, reports the most interesting recent scientific news relevant to the conservation of Western Palearctic bird species.

Notes

Another melanistic Cattle Egret

The note by P. J. Willoughby (*Brit. Birds* 94: 390-391) on a melanistic Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* observed in November 1995 in Goa, India, reminded me of a similar observation in southern Spain. On 2nd May 1993, while birding in steppe-like open countryside near the road between El Rocio and Almonte, northwest of the Coto Doñana, my uncle, Heinz Herkenrath, and I came across a strange-looking small egret. Its plumage was dark greyish, with some pale, almost white areas on the primaries and a white throat; some feathers on the crown and mantle were brownish, but these areas looked very dishevelled. The bill was orange with a paler tip, while the inner part of the upper mandible showed a striking yellow coloration. The iris was yellow.

Peter Herkenrath

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The legs were dark greenish-grey, but with yellow around the intertarsal joints. From its size and proportions, as well as its feeding behaviour, the bird was easily identified as an aberrant Cattle Egret. Unfortunately, a photograph which I took produced a poor result owing to over-exposure.

It is interesting that Willoughby also noted 'somewhat paler' primaries, 'this being very obvious in flight'. We did not have the opportunity to observe the Spanish egret in flight.

The aberrant egret was feeding in isolation from the many other Cattle Egrets, many of them associating with cattle, in the dry grass. The state of its plumage suggested that it was in poor health.

Like Willoughby, I am not aware of any published reference to a melanistic Cattle Egret.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk taking insects in flight

The note by M. R. Hopton and D. A. Richardson on a female Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* apparently eating insects in flight (*Brit. Birds* 90: 357-358) prompts us to record the following. At 15.10 hours on 6th July 1997, in warm, sunny weather with little wind, we were returning to our home in Harefield, Southampton, Hampshire, when we noticed a male Eurasian Sparrowhawk gliding slowly over our house towards a loose group of some 20 circling Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*. We went through to the back of the house to obtain a better view and, through 10 × 50 binoculars, watched the hawk as it circled among the gulls at a height of about 60 m. On two occasions, it lowered its legs and brought them forward as if to snatch a large insect; on the second occasion, it appeared about to transfer the food to its bill, but succeeded only in dropping it (a large insect

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was clearly seen to fall from the hawk's toes). The raptor then glided off at increasing speed as the gulls drifted slowly in the opposite direction.

We had never before seen a Eurasian Sparrowhawk attempt to catch insects in flight in this manner, which was highly reminiscent of the behaviour of some species of small falcon *Falco*.

In addition, whereas the female seen by Hopton & Richardson was described as 'weaving and turning in very tight manoeuvres', this male did not make any turning movements. It simply glided into the airspace occupied by swarming insects and, apparently, snatched food items from the air. It is also interesting that the gulls did not react to the hawk in the 'expected' way. In this area, the appearance of a Eurasian Sparrowhawk usually elicits a mobbing response from both gulls and Carrion Crows *Corvus corone*.

Reaction by European Nightjar to displaying Wood Pigeon

On 24th June 2001, on Bucklebury Common, West Berkshire, I heard the distinctive churring of a European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, coming from the direction of a known roost site, at about 10.35 hours. The weather was warm and

bright, with some cloud cover, and the song lasted for approximately ten seconds. I approached the roost site carefully, and a few minutes later the nightjar sang again for several seconds. During this second bout of singing, I

observed a displaying Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* making a wing-clapping sound close to, and above, the roost site. Diurnal churring by nightjars is not uncommon, and usually occurs during inclement weather, towards dusk or after the male has been disturbed from its roost or nest. None of these explained the churring in this

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case, and I can only assume that perhaps the wing-clapping sound produced by the Wood Pigeon was the trigger. Wing-clapping is extremely important in nightjar displays, especially in territorial disputes with other males, and the roosting male may have been warning off what it perceived as an intruder in its territory.

'Catnapping' by European Nuthatches

It is recognised that, at times, birds may 'catnap' during the day (Cullen 1964). I have occasionally noticed this type of behaviour by different bird species visiting a feeder in my garden at West Bagborough, Somerset. The species concerned have been Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*, Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*, Great Tit *P. uajor* and European Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*.

In the case of the European Nuthatch, the bird remains immobile, usually upside-down and with its eyes closed, while clinging to the feeder. My experience is that nuthatches remain

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in this state for longer than other species. For example, I observed one nap of two minutes and another of eight minutes and 45 seconds, both in July 2001. In each case, the nuthatch resumed active feeding behaviour at the end of each nap.

Of course, this behaviour is much easier to watch in a garden than in woodland, and is presumably not uncommon. Nonetheless, there must be a high risk of predation for an individual which gets into a daytime 'catnap' habit.

Cullen, J. M. 1964. Roosting. In: Landsborough Thomson, A. (ed.), *A New Dictionary of Birds*. London.

Interactions between Eurasian Jays and Grey Squirrels

I read with interest the note on a Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* which persistently robbed a Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis* (*Brit. Birds* 95: 26). Since this jay did not attempt to retrieve the nuts before the squirrel had found and removed them, it is fairly certain that it was not the jay that had originally hidden them. As shown by Bossema (1979), jays cannot use a sense of smell to recover food which another has hidden, as might a Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* or a Grey Squirrel. My own observations have convinced me that jays are much more often 'robbed' of their previously hidden food by Grey Squirrels than vice versa.

Grey Squirrels frequently 'smell out' and recover acorns hidden by Eurasian Jays in open areas, often up to 50 m from the nearest tree, and often much farther from the nearest oak *Quercus*, whereas jays cannot detect hidden food (even strong-smelling cheese) by scent and cannot usually find acorns that have been hidden by another jay or by a human (Goodwin 1956; Bossema 1979). The behaviour of a jay

Derek Goodwin

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which finds that a hidden acorn (or other food item) has vanished is quite specific (Goodwin 1956), and those who do not share the jay's excellent spatial memory will sympathise with its apparent bewilderment.

I recall an occasion when I observed a Eurasian Jay hiding acorns on my lawn, bringing two or three at a time from a nearby oak, pushing them singly into the substrate and then carefully covering each in the usual manner. On the second or third visit, a Grey Squirrel suddenly dashed into view and began to search the area. It soon found an acorn and sat up to eat it. The jay did not attempt to interfere with the squirrel, but at once uncovered one of its previously hidden acorns and flew off with it, probably only to hide it since it was back in less than a minute for another. This it took also, but on its return the squirrel charged the jay, forcing its retreat from the lawn.

Bossema, I. 1979. Jays and oaks: an eco-ethological study of a symbiosis. *Behaviour* 70: 1-170.

Goodwin, D. 1956. Further observations on the behaviour of the Jay. *Ibis* 98: 186-219.

News and comment

Compiled by Adrian Pitches

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of *British Birds*

Record sentence for egg-collector

An egg-collector described as 'a serious threat to British wildlife' has been jailed for six months. More than 450 eggs were seized by police and RSPB staff who raided the Merseyside home of Carlton D'Cruze. One of the UK's most prolific egg thieves, D'Cruze was convicted under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act and given the longest sentence ever passed for offences of this nature.

The RSPB said that it was one of the most important seizures of an egg collection for 20 years. South Sefton Magistrates Court heard that D'Cruze had targeted rare breeding birds such as White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* and Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*. At an earlier hearing he admitted taking clutches of Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* and Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* eggs from Norfolk in May 2000, and Cumbria in May and June 2001. The unemployed father-of-two also admitted possessing 453 eggs, from species including Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* and Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*, and 29 dead birds. The eggs were taken during a 15-year period from locations across England, Wales and Scotland, including Cumbria, Norfolk, Lancashire, Merseyside and the West Midlands.

Hen Harriers take off in England

A new recovery project in England, aimed at Britain's most persecuted raptor, has been marked by successful nesting at both ends of the country. Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* nested in Cornwall for the first time in more than a century, fledging three young, while a pair nested in the Yorkshire Dales for the first time in a decade. This was a fantastic result for English Nature's Hen Harrier Recovery Project, postponed from last year when foot-and-mouth disease prevented public access to most of England's moorlands. Coincidentally, 2001 marked a low point for Hen Harriers, with just three successful nests in England, all in the Forest of Bowland, Lancashire (*Brit. Birds* 94: 552).

English Nature's project co-ordinator, Richard Saunders, was understandably elated by the successful breeding in the Yorkshire Dales, where six chicks fledged. 'They are a credit to everyone involved in the project, including the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and the Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group. We are particularly grateful to the local landowner for allowing us access to the nesting site.' In total there were 11 nesting attempts in England, seven of which were successful. In addition to the Yorkshire and Cornish birds, there were six nests in Lancashire (four successful), two in Cumbria (one successful) and one in Northumberland. Predation and/or bad weather seem to have accounted for three of the nests, but one of the Cumbrian nests failed because of human persecution.

If grouse-shooting interests were responsible for last year's poor breeding success, there has been a more positive response in 2002. Of the four successful Lancashire nests, two were on the Duke of Westminster's Abbeystead Estate, a commercial grouse moor. The EN team reported that they have been extremely pleased with the high level of co-operation from landowners and gamekeepers.

The young harriers have been wing-tagged and are now being radio-tracked by researchers. Amazingly, one of the Lancashire harriers has flown over to Yorkshire and is associating with the Dales birds. If you see a wing-tagged Hen Harrier, note carefully the tag colours and contact Richard Saunders on 07970 636922, or e-mail: richard.saunders@english-nature.org.uk

Corn Crakes make it a Dales double

Another notable breeding event was recorded in the Yorkshire Dales this summer: this time involving a pair of Corn Crakes *Crex crex*. The Dales have some of England's last remaining hay meadows, which may explain why the National Park has attracted England's only nesting pair of Corn Crakes in 2002.

Elsewhere in North Yorkshire, up to six calling birds have been recorded at the Lower Derwent Valley NNR in recent years. In the Dales, conclusive proof of breeding was provided when two chicks were spotted by a farmer who had heard a male bird calling earlier in the season.

The Corn Crake is listed by BirdLife International as Globally Threatened. The species declined precipitously in Britain in the twentieth century, as farmers switched to mechanised mowing of grass, and abandoned traditional hay meadows. But a survey by the RSPB in 1998 revealed a total population of 589 singing males: a 23% increase on the 1993 census result of 480 singing males. All the birds were restricted to the north and west of Scotland, predominantly in the Outer Hebrides. A repeat survey is planned for 2003.

When the Yorkshire Dales farmer alerted DEFRA to breeding Corn Crakes on his land, ministry staff drew up a Corn Crake-friendly management plan. Experience in Scotland has shown that cutting hay from the middle of the field outwards offers the chicks a chance of moving to the field margins, and thus surviving. The success of this system was confirmed when the farmer cut his meadows and saw two chicks running clear.

And Yorkshire's kites are flying high

The Red Kite *Milvus milvus* reintroduction project in Yorkshire has had another good season, with 20 chicks reared to fledging in 2002. This is a great boost following the announcement that two kites, found dead earlier in the year, had died as a result of feeding on poisoned baits placed illegally in the open countryside. A total of 37 Red Kites has now been bred in the county since the reintroduction programme started in 1999. Young birds have been translocated from the Chilterns reintroduction scheme and released on the Harewood Estate near Leeds. The Yorkshire Red Kite project is a partnership between Harewood, the RSPB, English Nature and Yorkshire Water.

Capercaillie is the five-million-pound bird

The Government is spending £5 million in a last-ditch attempt to prevent the Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus* becoming extinct – again. Half the money will come from European funding and half from other bodies, including the Scottish Executive. The cash will be spent on a five-year plan to halt the decline in Scotland's Capercaillie population, now thought to number under 1,000 birds. Conservationists hope to bring the population up to the 5,000-mark by 2010.

Capercaillies became extinct in Scotland in the late eighteenth century because of hunting. Reintroduction started in 1837 and the population peaked at c. 20,000 birds before habitat degradation, low breeding success and collisions with deer fences brought about the present population crash.

The project funds will be spent on a strategy which includes work on all eight existing Capercaillie Special Protection Areas in Scotland, and will involve more than 30 private landowners, besides government agencies and conservation groups.

Durham Bee-eaters update

Britain's first breeding European Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster* for almost half a century left their adopted home in County Durham after almost two months in residence (*Brit. Birds* 95: 468). Wardening staff from the Durham Wildlife Trust and RSPB identified four young but only two successfully fledged: the adults and juveniles were seen heading south with Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* on August 28th.

During their stay, an estimated 15,000 people visited the bee-eater viewpoint in a farmer's field adjoining the quarry. The parking fee was a modest £2.00, which, levied on some 6,000-7,000 cars, is what farmers call diversification!

Ringling scheme reaches new milestone

The 5,000th BTO Bird Ringing Permit has just been presented, to Cambridge ringer Richard Billington. Simon Cox, now the holder of the lowest-existing permit number (13), issued in 1965, presented Richard's permit. Today, over 1,900 licensed ringers still operate and ring approximately 750,000 birds each year in Britain & Ireland. Around 10,000 ringed birds are found each year and reported to the BTO, both by ringers and members of the public who find dead birds. Ringing data are vital for conservation planning, allowing decisions to be made on the basis of scientific facts. For example, ringing data helped to show that it is probably a decrease in the survival rates that is driving the current decline in Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* in Britain.

Link: BTO (www.bto.org/ringing/ringinfo/become-a-ringer.htm).

Autumn carnage on Malta starts early

The 'official' start of the hunting season on Malta (1st September) is a debatable, even laughable concept, as hunters on the island flout all wildlife legislation and happily shoot anything and everything out of the sky, whatever the date on the calendar. *The Times of Malta* reported how Night Herons *Nycticorax nycticorax* and a Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* were shot down over Gozo in the run-up to the new hunting season. Both species are legally protected in Malta but, according to BirdLife Malta, 'law enforcement is non-existent on Gozo'.

One area in Malta where birds should be safe is the reserve of Buskett, which has been a bird sanctuary for decades. But in reaching the safe haven, birds first of all have to run the gauntlet of hunters camped around the reserve. *The Times of Malta* reported that, on 5th September, a flock of 26 European Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* coming in to roost were met with a barrage of shots: at least five were shot down in minutes, and only three actually landed in the trees on the reserve, the rest being finished off in the surrounding areas. Alternattiva Demokratika – the Green Party in Malta – said: 'Unfortunately the government is spineless when facing trigger-happy hunters who hold the entire country to ransom with their vote.'

But Malta is soon to face a far more important vote, that by the 15 European Union nations. Malta is desperate to be included in the enlargement of the EU scheduled for 2004, and final negotiations are underway. This is an excellent opportunity for the EU to insist on strict adherence to the EU Birds Directive, if Malta is to be given entry to the European club. But there are worrying hints from Brussels of a derogation for Malta whereby the Maltese would be allowed to maintain practices such as spring hunting and trapping, both of which are outlawed under the Birds Directive.

The annual raptor camp organised by BirdLife Malta took place on 14th-29th September, when birders from across Europe pitted themselves against the Maltese hunters to try and save some of the millions of migrant birds shot illegally every year.

Links: www.timesofmalta.com, www.raptorcamp.birdlifemalta.org, www.proactnow.org

continued on page 538

Obituary

Dr K. E. L. Simmons (1929-2002)

With the death of Ken Simmons on 25th February 2002, *BB* has lost a distinguished and loyal supporter. Of some 270 contributions he made to the ornithological literature, more than 120 were published in this journal. Ken joined the Notes Panel (later the Behaviour Notes Panel) in the early 1960s and remained on it until 2001. The well-used citation 'Cramp & Simmons' recognised his involvement with *Birds of the Western Palearctic* (*BWP*). But there was much more to Ken than these simple facts might suggest. His interests were wide ranging and he distinguished himself as an ornithologist, ethologist, aviculturalist, taxonomist and behavioural ecologist. In all this, and more, he was entirely self-taught. When Ken got really interested in a topic, he set out to master it as completely as possible.

Ken was born in Kenton, Middlesex, on 29th March 1929, but spent his early childhood in China. After schooling in London, Wiltshire and Worcestershire, he took a 'free' year (1945/46) roaming the countryside in Wiltshire, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. Observations at this time on Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* and Common Cuckoos *Cuculus canorus* were published 29 years later (*Brit. Birds* 67: 442-443). After professional training for a Teacher's Certificate in London, he moved to Reading to take up teaching posts, joined the BOU (while still 18), acquired his first binoculars and started serious birdwatching. It was only now that he started to meet other birdwatchers, and joined the RSPB and the BTO (becoming a member of the Scientific Advisory Committee of the latter in the 1950s). National Service (1948-50) then intervened and, as a Sergeant in the Royal Army Education Corps, he was posted to the Suez Canal Zone in Egypt. He described this period as vital for the development of his serious interest in ornithology. The material gathered then was the source of many of his later notes and papers. The topics included raptor migration, the biology and behaviour of individual species, distraction display (his first

paper, *Brit. Birds* 44: 181-187) and interspecific territorialism (*Ibis* 93: 407-413, one of his most quoted papers).

Bernard Tucker encouraged him early on and published his first Note in 1947 (*Brit. Birds* 40: 88). Ken later commented that he would never have guessed that some 30 years on he would be writing the equivalent sections for the 'new Handbook' (*BWP*) that Tucker had written for the 'old'. By the end of 1957, 60 notes and papers had been published. These included a series of six papers on what was now his favourite species: 'Studies on Great Crested Grebes' (*Podiceps cristatus*; *Avic. Mag.* 1955). During frequent visits to the Alexander Library in Oxford (cycling both ways from Reading in a day) he met Reg Moreau (from whom Ken learned much of use not only for writing papers, but also for editing), W. B. Alexander and Niko Tin-



313. Ken Simmons, on Ascension Island, March 1990.

Natalie Hewat

bergen (whose *The Study of Instinct*, published in 1950, had a big impact on Ken).

Ken met his wife, Marion, when both were teaching at the same school. They married in 1958 and in early 1962 they started a two-year stay on Ascension Island, he as the island schoolmaster and Marion as his assistant. Ken said that these two years were to change their lives. Even though he planned no bird studies (having decided that in his spare time he would write his grebe taxonomy paper and his Great Crested Grebe monograph) he had found out all he could about the island and its birds. Douglas Dorward had, nevertheless, recommended the Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* for study at two small stacks near Georgetown. Ken visited the stacks soon after his arrival and found the boobies easy to watch, 'engaging and most interesting' and was hooked. At the end of the two years he had filled over 50 notebooks of observations. This detailed study of the behavioural ecology of the boobies in relation to food supply set another challenge: how was he to find the time to write it up? Furthermore, it was soon after arriving on Ascension that the first clear indication of a painful, incurable spinal disease (ankylosing spondylitis) showed itself. For the rest of his life, the disease was to cast an ever-present shadow.

Soon after their return to England in February 1964, Ken obtained a Leverhulme Fellowship enabling him to register as a postgraduate student at the Department of Psychology, University of Bristol, in 1965. He was awarded his MSc, based on the Brown Booby studies, in 1967. In that year, a special grant from the Nature Conservancy (later the Natural Environment Research Council) enabled him to renew his Great Crested Grebe studies, 'spending three happy years being paid for doing what was previously my hobby'. He completed his PhD thesis, 'The biology of the parent-chick stage in the Great Crested Grebe', in 1970.

As well as his links with *BB*, Ken was a member of the BOU Recent Publications panel during 1956-68 (contributing 237 abstracts of ornithological papers for *Ibis*), was elected to the BOU Council in 1969, and served on the Meetings Committee. He maintained active contact with local birdwatchers during both his Reading and Bristol periods, being a committee member, joint recorder and Chairman of the Reading Ornithological Club and a founding committee member of the Bristol Ornithological Club.

In 1970, Uli Weidmann invited Ken to work with him on duck courtship at the University of Leicester. At this time, he also became involved with *BWP*, joining the Editorial Board in 1970, and starting work in his spare time on the Social Pattern and Behaviour section in late 1971. He became the second Editor in April 1973, and in 1975 a grant from the Scientific Research Council enabled him to work full-time on *BWP*, adding the Voice section and the Family Summaries to his responsibilities. Volume 1 appeared in 1977, Vol. 2 was in press and Vol. 3 was started, all of which contributed extra pressures on his health, but even so, several important papers appeared, most reflecting his work on grebes, boobies and other seabirds. In 1979 he was awarded the Union Medal of the BOU (see *Ibis* 121: 420).

In 1981, Ken restricted his work on *BWP* to the Family Summaries. This gave him more time to concentrate on a number of other projects. His books *The Singing Behaviour of Birds: A Guide for Ornithologists* (1984, Bristol Ornithological Club) and *The Great Crested Grebe* (1989, Shire Natural History No. 37) appeared. He produced his final major paper, 'Brood-division, parental favouritism and parental desertion in the Great Crested Grebe' (*Bristol Orn.* 24: 3-61) in 1997.

Between the 1960s and late 1990s he made eight trips to Ascension Island, to continue his seabird studies, but also to work on the conservation problems with which he had become increasingly concerned, contributing a chapter on this topic in *Seabirds on Islands: threats, case studies and action plans* (1994, BirdLife Conservation Series 1) with N. P. and M. J. Ashmole.

Ken's interests extended beyond birds to music, especially that of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century English composers, and particularly Elgar. He and Marion wrote a number of papers and booklets about Elgar's life, and Ken contributed a chapter to the book *Elgar Studies* (1990).

Ken applied a fastidious attention to detail when recording the activities of any birds under observation, but this was combined with an enthusiasm and great joy for the living bird. He leaves as his legacy an immense contribution to the ornithological literature. He was a man of intellectual energy who had great, but modest, courage. We send our condolences to Marion.

Robin Prytherch and Robert Gillmor



Monthly Marathon

Regular readers of this feature may have noticed that this writer is guided by 'gut instinct', or intuition, just as often as by clues derived from careful, detailed analysis of the photographs. I have had the June 2002 issue of *BB* open on my desk at photo number 189 (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 199; repeated here as plate 314) for at least a couple of weeks but, worryingly, I am still waiting for the 'inspiration' that will help me to confirm what I think it is. Give me the Druridge Bay Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* (written up in the same issue) any day!

My time is up now; there can be no more prevarication. In an attempt to kick-start the brain cells, I resorted to scanning the small printed image at a high resolution on to my home computer, in the hope that a larger image on screen would provide some additional clues, but on this occasion size is not really the problem.

Clearly, we are dealing with a member of the *Tringa* family. The spotted upperparts and yellowish-

green legs eliminate a few and we are left with Marsh Sandpiper *T. stagnatilis*, Greenshank *T. nebularia*, Greater Yellowlegs *T. melanoleuca*, Lesser Yellowlegs *T. flavipes*, Solitary Sandpiper *T. solitaria*, Green Sandpiper *T. ochropus* and Wood Sandpiper *T. glareola*. Some of you may wonder why the two yellowlegs have not been eliminated immediately on the grounds that the mystery bird's legs are not, as they usually are in these two species, clearly yellow. A perusal of published photographs of Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs indicates, however, that the typically clean, bright yellow colour of their legs often does not come across on the printed page. Quite a few photographs depict birds with leg colour very close to that we can see on our mystery bird, so I am



Olaf Lessow

314. Wood Sandpiper *T. glareola*, Germany, date unknown.

inclined not to dismiss the possibility of our bird being a yellowlegs on leg colour alone. Marsh Sandpiper is really only spotted (white or buffish) above in juvenile plumage, but the pattern is quite different, usually with distinct internal patterning in the larger feathers. Juvenile Greenshank too, although variable (see *Brit. Birds* 83: 117-121), tends to look more 'striped' longitudinally on the upperparts with less strongly edge-spotted feathers than our mystery bird. Solitary and Green Sandpipers can be confidently eliminated on the basis that they are always darker above, and both have much coarser tail barring than is hinted at in the sliver of tail just visible in photo number 189.

This leaves us with just Wood Sandpiper and the two yellowlegs species. All three have rather similar markings on the upperparts, which show subtle variations according to age and season. The individual scapular feather patterns and somewhat plainer-looking wing-coverts on the bird's right side suggest a spring adult rather than a juvenile. Judging leg length accurately from this angle is virtually impossible (for me at least), but nevertheless I am a little concerned by how long the legs seem to look (which might suggest a yellowlegs) since other features (apart from the leg colour) do not, as far



315. 'Monthly Marathon'. Photo no. 192. Eighth stage in twelfth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules (see page 36), then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, c/o The Banks, Mountfield, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JY, or by e-mail to editor@britishbirds.co.uk, to arrive by 30th November 2002.

as I can determine, support either yellowlegs option. We know that the folded wing structure, in particular the projection of the primaries beyond the longest tertial, as well as the length of wing-tip extending beyond the tail, are useful means of distinguishing both Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs from Wood Sandpiper (in the field, of course, it is only the latter two that are likely to present any difficulty). Judging these points is not so easy from this angle but the first glance suggests quite a long projection of primaries beyond the tertials, indicative of a yellowlegs, especially Lesser Yellowlegs. Puzzlingly, however, there does not appear to be any significant projection of wing-tip beyond the tail as is usual in both yellowlegs species, particularly so in Lesser. It is always a good idea when assessing critical primary projection and/or wing versus tail length to first check that the bird's tertials are all present and intact, and that its primaries are not actively growing. The latter would not be so easily determined in a photo like this, but even a cursory examination suggests that our bird is missing tertials and this

could well account for the impression of a long primary projection. It is difficult to be sure which of the full complement of four tertials either side is retained, but it would appear to be the second, counting from the inside outwards. We have only to imagine one similarly large but longer tertial outside this feather (it is always the third tertial that is longest) to reduce the primary projection significantly and thereby eliminate the 'strongest' grounds for identifying the mystery bird as one or other of the yellowlegs. A quick check of my own reference material indicates that it is quite usual for Wood Sandpipers to be missing one or more tertials during spring migration, and this provides sufficient reassurance to conclude that our mystery wader is indeed a Wood Sandpiper, as suggested by most, if not all, of the features that can be determined in this tricky photograph. I must remember to pay attention to the next head-scratching Wood Sandpiper I see from behind and try to gauge how long its legs really are!

Killian Mullarney

Contestants entering this round of the competition had a tough time sorting out this particular wader, and many were stumped by the missing tertials solution that Killian has correctly described. The majority (55%) of entrants thought it was a Greater Yellowlegs, while another 15% opted for Lesser Yellowlegs. The remaining contestants plumped for a variety of other wading birds, but, amazingly, only Jon Holt correctly identified this bird as a Wood Sandpiper. Photo number 189 has, therefore, had a massive impact on the current leader board, with Jon Holt now in the lead with this one correct answer, and everyone else back on zero! This Wood Sandpiper was photographed in Germany by Olaf Lessow.

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STOP PRESS News and comment

Brown Skuas – new for the Western Palearctic?

Two skuas *Catharacta*, one discovered on St Agnes, Scilly, in October 2001, the other at Aberavon, Glamorgan, in February 2002, have provoked considerable debate as to their identity. Both skuas were unwell and taken into care, allowing feather samples to be collected from which DNA was extracted. The resulting DNA analysis at the University of Glasgow has shown that the lineages of both individuals lie within the Brown Skua group *Catharacta antarctica antarctica/hamiltoni/lombergi*. Furthermore, measurements of the Glamorgan bird suggest that it may, in fact, be a 'Falkland Skua' *C. a. antarctica*. Unfortunately, no measurements were obtained from the Scilly bird. When the full documentation has been assembled, these two records will be submitted to BBRC and BOURC to be considered for admission to the British List, although the evidence appears conclusive.

This is a sensational and unexpected result, which could have enormous repercussions for the identification of large skuas in the North Atlantic, particularly since observers in Europe have tended to consider only Great Skuas *C. skua* and South Polar Skuas *C. mac-*

cornicki when faced with problem large skuas. It is for this reason that this information is being released now, prior to formal publication of the findings.

Large skuas are extremely difficult to identify for several reasons, not least that the various forms are closely related, and their appearance is highly variable. In addition, they are almost exclusively pelagic from the time when they are in juvenile plumage until their return to the breeding grounds as much older birds. Consequently, young immature birds are seldom seen in museum collections, nor are they photographed in situations when it is possible to verify the identification. As such, these two birds provide a valuable yardstick against which further progress can be made.

Links: http://www.magikcircle.com/birds/image.asp?title_id=574 (where photos of the birds are displayed); <http://www.surfbirds.com/mb/Features/skua-identification.html> (which includes a paper on the moult of the Scilly skua).

Contributed by Dick Newell, Steve Votier, Stuart Bearhop, Bob Furness, Martin Kennedy, Martin Scott, Paul Dukes and Steve Moon

Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary of unchecked reports covers mid August to mid September 2002.

'Soft-plumaged petrel' *Pterodroma madeiral fae/mollis* Bridges of Ross (Co. Clare), 23rd and 28th August; Flamborough Head (East Yorkshire), 26th August, same Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire), 26th August; Flamborough Head, 1st September, presumed same Whitburn (Co. Durham), 1st September; Cape Clear (Co. Cork), 11th September. **Great Shearwater** *Puffinus gravis* Good passage in late August, including 695 past Porthgwarra (Cornwall) on 30th August.

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* Caerlaverock area (Dumfries & Galloway), 6th-13th September. **Great White Egret** *Egretta alba* In addition to those reported last month: Warham Greens (Norfolk), 21st August; Mullion Cliffs 23rd August, Hayle 1st September, Argal Reservoir 2nd September (all Cornwall, and presumably the same individual as reported earlier in August); Minsmere (Suffolk), 30th August; Bowling Green Marsh (Devon), 3rd September; Staines Moor (Surrey), 6th September; Grafham Water (Cambridgeshire), 11th September. **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* Anglers Country Park (West Yorkshire), 10th September. **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* Four, Otmoor (Oxfordshire), 6th September, which departed to the northeast and were seen later the same day over Salthouse (Norfolk); Budleigh Salterton (Devon), 6th-12th September.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* Cotswold Water Park (Wiltshire), 25th-27th August. **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* Sumburgh and Brow Marsh (Shetland), 10th-13th September.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), 27th August to 9th September. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* In Ireland, three between 8th and 15th September, with singles in Co. Donegal, Co. Kerry and Co. Wexford. **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* St Agnes (Scilly), 27th-29th August; Titchwell (Norfolk), 31st August to 10th September; Lissagriffin (Co. Cork), 11th

September; Oare Marshes (Kent), 11th September. **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* In Ireland, four between 5th and 11th September, two in Co. Cork and singles in Co. Clare and Co. Waterford. **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* Connah's Quay (Flintshire), 27th August; Stronsay (Orkney), 27th August; Fair Isle (Shetland), 1st-2nd September; Dublin (Co. Dublin), 10th-12th September. **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* Fife Ness (Fife), 10th September; Trimley Marsh (Suffolk), 10th September; Blake-ney Point (Norfolk), 12th September. **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Loch of Strathbeg (Northeast Scotland), 1st September. **Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* Carrahane (Co. Kerry), 11th September. **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* Belfast Lough (Co. Down), 5th-8th September; Eagland Mill (Lancashire), 12th-13th September. **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* Maldon (Essex), 25th-29th August. **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* Loch of Tankerness (Orkney), 5th September.

Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica* Various localities between Nanjizal, Sennen, Marazion and Drift Reservoir (all Cornwall), 31st August to 12th September. **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* Black-rock (Co. Kerry), 9th September.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* Woolston Eyes (Cheshire), 4th September; Land's End (Cornwall), 11th September. **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* Fair Isle, 31st August to 1st September, two on 2nd September, then one 3rd-9th September; Quendale (Shetland), 6th-11th September. **Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia* Fair Isle, 27th August; Weybourne (Norfolk), 12th September.



316. Adult male Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*, Elmley, Kent, August 2002.

Rebecca Nason

Steve Young/Birdwatch



317. Juvenile Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*, Elmley, Kent, August 2002.

25th August; Scolt Head (Norfolk), 28th August; Donna Nook (Lincolnshire), 10th-12th September; Hartlepool Headland (Cleveland), 10th-13th September, with two on 12th; Bampton Cliffs (East Yorkshire), 12th-13th September; Fife Ness, 12th September.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* Bryher (Scilly), 21st August; Portland (Dorset), 21st August; Lundy (Devon), 25th August. **Two-barred Crossbill** *Loxia leucoptera* In addition to those reported last month: Veensgarth (Shetland), 21st August; two, Fair Isle, 22nd

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* Fair Isle, 7th September. **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 10th September. **Olivaceous Warbler** *Hippolais pallida* Undisclosed site (Essex), 24th August. **Booted Warbler** *Hippolais caligata* Sheringham (Norfolk), 23rd August; Sumburgh Head (Shetland), 24th-25th August; North Ronaldsay, 25th-26th August; Beachy Head (East Sussex), 31st August; Sheepcote Valley (East Sussex), 4th September; Land's End, 10th-11th September. **Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Two, Fair Isle, 23rd August with one staying until



318. Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica*, Drift Reservoir, Cornwall, September 2002.

George Reszeter

Derek Jones



319. Juvenile Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera*, Fair Isle, Shetland, August 2002.

August, another 8th-11th September; Noss (Shetland), 23rd-24th August; near Strines (South Yorkshire), 1st-5th September. **Common Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra* There was evidence of an irruption into Britain during the second half of August, including 240 passing through Spurn (East Yorkshire) on 26th August, and several other good counts inland, including 100 around Howden Reservoir (Derbyshire/South Yorkshire) on 4th September and 160 at Slusters Enclosure, New Forest (Hampshire) on 4th September. **Chestnut Bunting** *Emberiza rutila* Fair Isle, 4th-7th September. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza aureola* Inner Farne (Northumberland), 5th September; Quendale, 10th-13th September.



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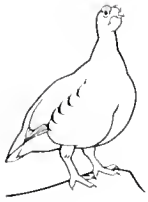
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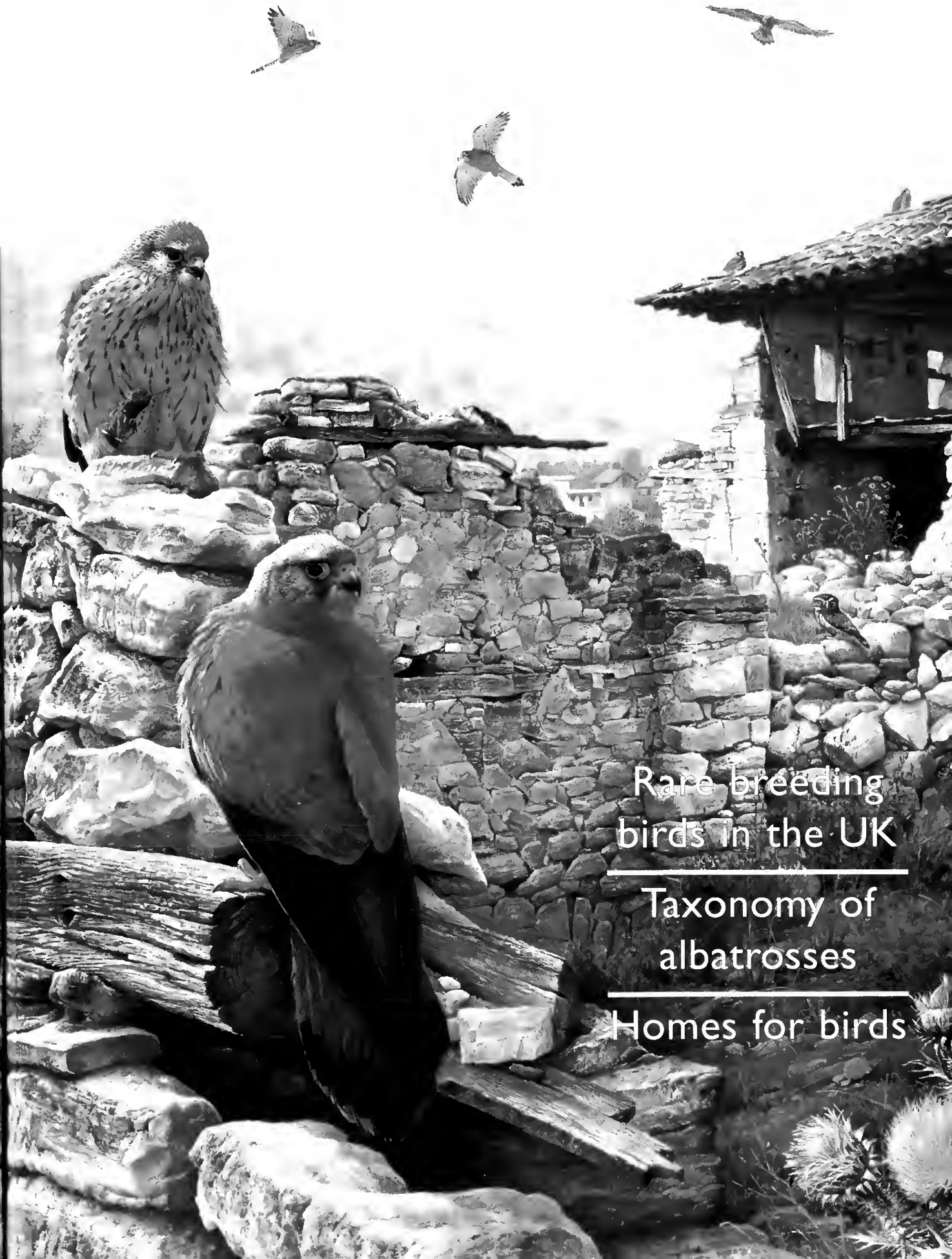


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Erratum

We apologise to our subscribers for an error which occurred during the printing stage of the October 2002 issue of *British Birds*. In the 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2001' (*Brit. Birds* 95: 476-528), the symbols traditionally used to denote 'male' and 'female' were inadvertently replaced with the letters 'F' and 'C', respectively. We regret the inconvenience caused by this error, which happened when an electronic file was passed from the printers' computer system into the plate-making machine (and at a stage after the final set of proofs had been seen by *BB* staff). During negotiations with our printers, Hastings Printing Company, we have established new procedures which will prevent such a fault occurring again.

When referring to the BBRC Report, therefore, please bear in mind that 'F' is used to denote male and that 'C' denotes female.

Eds

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2000

Malcolm Ogilvie and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel

This is the twenty-eighth annual report of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel giving the status of Britain's rarest breeding birds for the year 2000. Most totals are set out by county, region or, occasionally, country; only rarely are actual localities given. This is done to counter the continuing threat from egg-collectors and, in some cases, to reduce the risk of disturbance from over-zealous birdwatchers. Where county names are given, these are grouped within the Panel's ten regions (see below).

The Panel

The current (August 2002) membership of the Panel is: Dr Colin Bibby, Dr Humphrey Crick, Dr Ian Francis, Judith Smith, Dr Ken Smith, David Stroud and Dr Malcolm Ogilvie (Secretary). The individual members of the Panel serve in a personal capacity, but three are also able to reflect the interests and needs of the respective sponsoring bodies. The work of the Panel is supported financially by the JNCC (on behalf of the country conservation agencies) and the RSPB, with additional support coming from the BTO.

Coverage

The Panel collects records from the whole of the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, but not from the Republic of Ireland. The majority of the records included in this report are submitted by County Recorders, with additional data from Schedule 1 licence forms received from the three country agencies and from specialist groups. Coverage in 2000 was excellent, although in a few cases no records

were received from County Recorders, but at least some information was available from the licence forms. With regard to the acceptance of records for publication, it is the Panel's policy to follow the view of the County Recorder and the local committee, and only in very exceptional cases to publish records which have not been vetted in this way.

Review of the year 2000

March was generally mild, dry and sunny across much of Britain, with occasional cold snaps. If this encouraged any birds, especially ground-nesting species, to start breeding early, they soon lost out as April started with heavy snow in parts of southern Britain. This quickly turned into heavy rain, which continued over the next two weeks, causing widespread flooding in the East Midlands and East Anglia and washing out nests. Despite a drier spell towards the month's end, it was the wettest April in England and Wales for 250 years, and at least the eastern half of Scotland was also much wetter than usual. May began with warm and generally dry conditions, but the second half was very wet and cool with renewed flooding in low-lying areas, causing further problems for ground-nesting birds. Only north and west Scotland managed a sunnier and warmer month than usual and even here substantial rain fell. June was better, although thunderstorms caused flooding in northeast England and there was a severe gale across much of Scotland on 12th-13th. Flooding in the north of England was repeated in mid July, though overall the month was reasonably dry across the whole country. High tides are an almost annual

problem for coastal nesting species in one part of the country or another, but there does seem to have been an increase in inland flooding in spring and early summer of recent years.

Red-throated Divers *Gavia stellata* in Shetland had one of their worst seasons on record, while things were only a little better in Orkney. Black-throated Divers *G. arctica* fared slightly better than in 1999, with more young raised, both on rafts and at natural sites. There was yet another decline in the numbers of nesting Slavonian Grebes *Podiceps auritus* but their breeding success rose markedly, to the highest ever recorded. Conversely, although Black-necked Grebes *P. nigricollis* suffered poor breeding success, there were more confirmed breeding pairs than ever before. Improvements to *Phragmites* reedbed habitat which will benefit Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* are now starting to pay dividends. Numbers are continuing to increase slowly, with at least three additional booming males and one more locality compared with 1999, although the number of young fledged remains worryingly poor. Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* continue to spread and increase in numbers, and now breed in six counties. Eurasian Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia* failed to maintain their precarious toehold and did not breed this year, but nesting activity was reported from some new sites.

Gadwalls *Anas strepera* were reported in higher numbers than in any previous year, but few Northern Pintails *A. acuta* were found and fared badly in the areas where they were recorded. Garganey *A. querquedula* numbers declined (but only slightly) for the third year running, while the number of localities from which they were reported was well down.

The survey of European Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* organised in 2000 by the Panel produced the desired improved coverage, resulting in increased numbers reported. It is hoped that this increased monitoring effort can be maintained in future years. Red Kites *Milvus milvus* continue to increase, although breeding success of the natural Welsh population was poor because of cold, wet weather in May. The re-established populations did well, with further increases in southern and central England and central Scotland, while the recently established population in northern England bred successfully for the first time. Unfortunately, the population in northern Scotland still lacks the momentum of the southern breeders

and numbers here increased only slightly, although breeding success was above average. The number of successful breeding pairs of White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* in the re-established population increased from 1999; 12 young were reared, the second-best year to date. Coverage of Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* was excellent and both the total of nesting birds and the number of young produced were new records, despite poor weather in the early summer. In contrast, although the number of breeding Montagu's Harriers *C. pygargus* rose encouragingly, their breeding success was very poor. Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* continued their steady increase, though again the number of young fledged was below average. There was the added excitement of the first breeding record in England for well over a century, when a pair nested successfully in the Lake District.

For the second successive year, Common Quails *Coturnix coturnix* suffered a poor year, with the smallest total since 1993. Numbers of Corn Crakes *Crex crex* increased slightly, though as usual they did better on those islands where habitat management is sympathetic to the specific needs of this sensitive species.

Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* bred in record numbers but production, where it was recorded, was extremely poor, being adversely affected by high tides and flooding of their nesting lagoons. Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedipnemus* also bred in larger numbers than before, but breeding success fell. Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* suffered from flooding, as they are always so prone to do. A pair of Green Sandpipers *Tringa ochropus* bred in Scotland for the second year running. Last year's welcome increase in the number of breeding Red-necked Phalaropes *Phalaropus lobatus* in Shetland was not sustained and productivity was particularly poor. Birds were present at a number of other locations, but breeding was not proved at any of them.

Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus* bred in record numbers in 2000, but heavy rain and high tides took their toll on nests. A Yellow-legged Gull *L. cachinnans michahellis* and Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus* hybrid pair bred for the second year running, though unsuccessfully. Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* fell back from last year's improved figures and production was also poor.

A pair of Bohemian Waxwings *Bombycilla garrulus* at a locality in northern Scotland in

early May might have gone without comment had a single bird not still been there a month later. Breeding was not proved, but must have been a possibility. Two pairs of Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* nested successfully, the first to do so since 1996. Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* continues its relentless slide into oblivion with just two reports this year, though one was of a successful breeding pair, rearing two broods. Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* numbers increased, thanks to a full survey in Kent, which found substantially more than in any previous year. With the continued run of mild winters, conditions have favoured the survival of overwintering warblers, with both Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* and Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* reaching new record totals.

Firecrests *Regulus ignicapilla* were surveyed in several areas and reached a total close to last year's high numbers. Although Bearded Tits *Panurus biarmicus* have been thought to be declining in recent years, their numbers rose sharply in 2000 to a new high. Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* had yet another dismal breeding season, with the lowest number of pairs since 1986 when special surveys began of this species' core range in eastern England. Nest-building by two pairs of Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* was reported, the most positive sign of breeding for a couple of years.

Conservation uses of Panel data

It is the Panel's policy to make data available for relevant conservation uses. As well as site-specific information (e.g. for the review of Special Protection Areas by JNCC and the country conservation agencies), national datasets have been used by the RSPB for planning surveys. The Panel's data have also played a key role in national population estimates and in the development and implementation of recovery plans for certain species. The publication 'The state of the UK's birds 2001' (published jointly by RSPB, JNCC, WWT and BTO in 2002) makes extensive use of the Panel's data, as does the recently revised 'The population status of birds in the UK' (*Brit. Birds* 95: 410-448).

Publications

The bibliography at the end of this report gives details of published results of censuses and surveys of the numbers and distribution of Panel species, many making use of the Panel's data.

Acknowledgments

The Panel, in particular its Secretary, gratefully acknowledges the willing co-operation of all the many county, regional and local recorders throughout the United Kingdom.

Jake Allsopp and the Golden Oriole Group, Ian Carter, Colin Crooke, Roy Dennis, Julianne Evans, Dr Gillian Gilbert, Dr Rhys Green, Malcolm Henderson, Bob Image, Dr Ron Summers, and the Welsh Kite Trust, all supplied information for their particular specialities and grateful thanks are due to them.

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We should also like to express our sincere thanks to all those individuals whose fieldwork produced the observations that form the basis for this report.

Key to geographical regions used in this report

Note that recent further reorganisation of local government throughout Britain has made some of the names below obsolete. Exactly as happened after the last major reorganisation, in 1974, however, some English county and area bird societies have changed their recording areas and others have not. So, without defining the precise boundaries of the 'counties' given below, these are, so far as possible, the names used by the local recorders who sent the Panel their information.

For Wales and Scotland, it has been decided, again so far as possible, to use the names of the recording areas included in the respective annual bird reports of those two countries. Each publishes a map showing the names and boundaries, that for Wales being based on the Watsonian vice-counties, and that for Scotland on the local bird-report areas.

England, SW Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Isles of Scilly, Somerset, Wiltshire

England, SE Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, London & Middlesex, Oxfordshire, Surrey, Sussex (East and West)

England, E Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire,

Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Suffolk

England, Central Derbyshire, Herefordshire, Leicestershire (with Rutland), Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands, Worcestershire

England, N Cheshire, Cleveland, Cumbria, Durham, Greater Manchester, Isle of Man, Lancashire, Merseyside, Northumberland, North Humberside, Tyne & Wear, Yorkshire (North, South and West)

Wales The Watsonian vice-counties of Anglesey (Môn), Brecon (Brycheiniog), Caernarfon, Carmarthen (Caerfyrddin), Ceredigion, Denbigh (Dinbych), Flint (Fflint), Glamorgan and Gower (Morgannwg), Gwent, Meirionnydd, Montgomery (Trefaldwyn), Pembroke (Penfro), Radnor (Maesyfed)

Scotland, S The local bird-recording areas of Ayrshire, Borders, Clyde (comprising West and East Dunbartonshire including that part now in Argyll & Bute, North and South Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, City of Glasgow, Inverclyde, Stirling–Clyde drainage), Clyde Islands (Arran, the Cumbraes, Bute), Dumfries & Galloway, Lothian

Scotland, Mid The local bird-recording areas of

Angus & Dundee, Fife, Forth (Clackmannanshire, Falkirk, Stirling), Perth & Kinross, North-east Scotland (Aberdeenshire), Moray & Nairn

Scotland, N & W The local bird-recording areas of Argyll & Bute (except Bute and former West Dunbartonshire), Caithness, Highland (Bade-noch & Strathspey, Inverness, Ross & Cromarty, Sutherland), Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles

Northern Ireland Co. Antrim, Co. Armagh, Co. Down, Co. Fermanagh, Co. Londonderry, Co. Tyrone

Systematic list

The definitions of 'Confirmed breeding', 'Probable breeding' and 'Possible breeding' used in the Panel's reports follow those recommended by the European Ornithological Atlas Committee (now part of the European Bird Census Council). Within tables, the abbreviations 'Confirmed (pairs)' and 'Possible/probable (pairs)' mean, respectively, 'Number of pairs confirmed breeding' and 'Number of pairs possibly or probably breeding'.

Within each species account, numbers given in the format '1-4 pairs' indicate (in this case) one proven breeding pair and a possible maximum total of four breeding pairs.

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

Long-term monitoring continued in Orkney and Shetland. Other, more casual, breeding observations are not listed.

Scotland, N & W

HIGHLAND Of five pairs nesting on rafts, one reared two young.

ORKNEY On Hoy, of 66 pairs, 33 were successful, rearing 35 chicks, and 33 failed; on West Mainland, of 14 pairs, nine were successful, rearing 12 young; on Rousay, nine pairs attempted to breed, but only two young were seen and fledging success was unknown.

SHETLAND Overall, the number of successful pairs in the various study areas was equal lowest since records began in 1979. On Fetlar, 23 pairs reared 13 young; in the Yell study area, seven pairs reared ten young; in south Unst, two pairs reared just one young; at Hermaness eight pairs raised six young; and on Foula 12 pairs raised four young. Productivity on Foula remained very low, as has been the case since 1997, while that on Hermaness and Fetlar was about average.

WESTERN ISLES On North Uist, 14 pairs nested, while a partial survey on South Uist revealed 18 pairs. A survey of the peatlands of Lewis and Harris in 1994-96 gave an estimated population of 100 pairs.

Although some pairs on Shetland laid early (and one chick on Yell was ready to fledge in mid July), the severe storm of 13th June had a significant impact on breeding success, with large waves washing out nests on many larger lochs. The late date of such an event was particularly important because it was simply too late for many birds to relay. The total British breeding population was estimated at 935-1,500 pairs in 1994 (Stone *et al.* 1997).

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*

The RSPB monitored 93 sites, of which 83 were occupied. Of the 57 rafts available in 53 territories across north and west Scotland, at least 33 rafts were used, and 18 raft-nesting pairs were known to hatch young, 13 of which reared 14 chicks.

Year	Sites monitored	Sites occupied	Rafts used/ available	Young fledged (av. chicks per pair)			Production ratio raft site to natural site
				Rafts	Natural	Total	
1996	120	96	27/45	19 (0.70)	28 (0.41)	47 (0.49)	1.7
1997	98	82	32/41	17 (0.53)	12 (0.10)	29 (0.35)	5.3
1998	114	82	38/45	19 (0.50)	12 (0.28)	31 (0.38)	1.8
1999	90	77	38/48	14 (0.37)	7 (0.27)	21 (0.27)	1.4
2000	93	83	33/57	14 (0.42)	13 (0.33)	27 (0.33)	1.3

There was a decline from the two previous years in the number of rafts used but, despite poor weather from mid May onwards, the productivity at all sites rose slightly compared with 1999.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Four localities in three counties; three adults in summer plumage.

England, E

One locality: summer-plumaged adult at usual site, 20th March to 21st August.

Scotland, S

Three localities: (1) summer-plumaged adult on three dates between 14th April and 1st June; (2)(3) summer-plumaged adult on 3rd June and 17th-22nd June, presumed same bird.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	5	3	9	7	10	6	8	4	10	6	4
No. pairs	2	1	3	0	1	4	2	1	4-5	1	0
No. individuals	3	4	12	7	13	10	10	3	5	3-5	3

The worst year since 1988. At the site in southern Scotland where a pair was present between 1983 and 1999, sometimes attempting to breed, only one bird appeared, on just three dates, suggesting the end of that particular long-running pairing.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

15 localities: 29 pairs breeding, fledging 33 young.

Scotland, Mid and N & W

15 localities: (1) Loch Ruthven. 14 pairs present and all probably bred, rearing 22 young, plus three unpaired birds; (2)-(15) 17 pairs of which 15 bred and nine were successful, rearing 11 young; also three unpaired birds.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	36	31	34	33	32	31	24	22	25	24	15
Confirmed (pairs)	74	61	72	73	51	58	49	53	42	35	29
Possible/ probable (pairs)	12	13	5	4	8	7	6	3	8	6	8
Max. total pairs	86	74	77	77	59	65	55	56	50	41	37
Number of young reared	47	51	38	25	30	46	17	15	16	12	33
Young/territorial pair	0.64	0.84	0.53	0.34	0.59	0.79	0.35	0.28	0.38	0.34	1.14

Although the number of pairs declined to their lowest since monitoring began in the early 1970s,

productivity was, encouragingly, the highest ever recorded, at 1.14 young reared per pair on territory. This compares with under 0.4 young per pair in the previous four years and a long-term average of just over 0.60. Alarming, the number of sites used fell even more sharply, making the population ever more concentrated. Loch Ruthven continued its pre-eminence, and productivity here was at a record high. The RSPB is continuing its research into habitat management and the effects of predation. The Panel is grateful to the North and East Scotland Regional Offices of the RSPB for information on numbers and breeding performance.



Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*.

Mike Langman

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

29 localities in 16 counties: 48-65 pairs bred.

England, SW

Two localities: 0-2 pairs. AVON One locality: pair in April, single in July; two juveniles in August, but no evidence that they were reared here. HAMPSHIRE One locality: summer-plumaged adult, May-June.

England, SE

Six localities: 3-9 pairs. ESSEX One locality: pair attempted to breed, but were unsuccessful. HERTFORDSHIRE One locality: 2-3 pairs bred, fledging one young; second young reared by pair of Great Crested Grebes *P. cristatus*, and apparently fledged. KENT Four localities: (1) up to three adults in March-April; juvenile in July possible migrant, but bred here in 2001; (2) two adults in March-April and again July-August; (3)(4) pairs in summer plumage in May.

England, Central

Five localities: 9-11 pairs. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Two localities: (1) seven pairs bred hatching minimum 16 young of which up to ten fledged; (2) two pairs attempted to breed, neither successful. STAFFORDSHIRE One locality: pair displayed in May. WARWICKSHIRE Two localities: (1) agitated adult in May, no further observations; (2) two juveniles in August, perhaps related to site (1).

England, N

11 localities: 29-34 pairs. CHESHIRE One locality: nine pairs bred successfully, at least 16 young fledged, tenth pair probably bred. GREATER MANCHESTER One locality: pair probably bred. NORTHUMBERLAND Five localities: (1) 14 pairs bred, but only six young reared, remainder deserted, probably due to predation by Mink *Mustela vison*; (2) two pairs reared three young; (3)(4) single pairs reared two young; (5) pair reared one young. YORKSHIRE Four localities: (1) pair reared two young; (2)-(4) pairs of summer-plumaged adults in May-June.

Scotland, S

Two localities: 1-3 pairs. BORDERS Two localities: (1) pair bred, second pair probably did so; (2) displaying pair, no proof of breeding.

Scotland, Mid

Three localities: 6 pairs. ANGUS One locality: pair bred unsuccessfully. FIFE One locality: two pairs reared four young. PERTSHIRE One locality: three pairs bred, but no young reared.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	19	25	29	31	32	30	32	26	18	22	29
Confirmed (pairs)	21	19	26	24	27	30	20	17	35	34	48
Possible/ probable (pairs)	16	34	34	26	54	47	33	29	13	19	17
Max. total pairs	37	53	60	50	81	77	53	46	48	53	65

By far the best year ever for confirmed breeding pairs, though success was poor, including at the key site in Northumberland.

Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

17 localities, of which 16 held a minimum of 22 and a maximum of 28 booming males; at least ten young fledged from a minimum of 14 nests.

England, SW

One locality: booming male early in season; adult carrying food June/July indicates probable breeding but no young seen.

England, SE

One locality: booming male; possibly bred.

England, E

13 localities: (1) seven booming males, of which one was occasional, six nests from which six young fledged; (2) three booming males, one occasional, four nests, of which three failed and the outcome was unknown at the other; (3) two booming males, one occasional, one nest, success not known; (4) one booming male, one nest, at least one young fledged; (5) one booming male, one nest, but no young fledged; (6) no booming heard, but one nest and one young fledged; (7) one occasional booming male, one nest, success not reported; (8)-(13) single booming males, one occasional, no confirmed nesting.

England, N

Two localities: (1) two booming males, two nests, one of which predated, two young fledged; (2) two booming males, no evidence of breeding.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. booming localities	12	13	14	13	16	13	10	10	12	16	17
Confirmed nests	3	4	4	5	5	11	8	15	13	21	14
Booming males (min.)	18	16	18	15	15	19	22	11	13	19	22
Booming males (max.)	20	17	19	17	16	20	22	12	18	24	28

The welcome increase seen in recent years continues, with the most localities with booming birds since 1984, though comparisons should be treated with caution, because of stricter criteria now being applied to records of booming males (see last year's report). The Panel is grateful to RSPB for supplying data on booming males and nest success, monitored as part of the joint RSPB/EN bittern research programme.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Nine localities: 68-77 pairs bred.

England, SW

Seven localities: 59-68 pairs. AVON Two localities: (1)(2) up to eight birds in April and four in June in suitable habitat, but not breeding. DORSET Two localities: (1) 48 pairs bred, number of fledged young unknown; (2) one or two pairs bred. HAMPSHIRE Two localities: (1) 8-11 pairs bred, at least 11 young fledged; (2) one pair bred, three more may have done so, at least two young fledged. SOMERSET One locality: pair bred, rearing two young.

England, SE

Two localities: nine pairs. ESSEX One locality: seven pairs reared 14 young. KENT One locality: two pairs reared at least four young.

The increase and spread continues, with first breeding records for both Essex and Kent. With records of birds in apparently suitable habitat in Sussex and others turning up in heronries north to Warwickshire and Lancashire, the future for this attractive heron appears positive, although because none of these showed definite breeding activity they are excluded from the details above.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Six localities: 0-7 pairs bred.

England, E

Two localities: (1) two pairs present during the summer where breeding suspected but not proved in 1998, but did not breed; (2) pair present from 29th April to 5th May; nest built in reeds, but quickly dismantled by Common Coots *Fulica atra*.

England, N

Three localities: (1) an adult and a first-year bird at the site where breeding took place in 1999, 19th May to 30th August, but no breeding activity; (2) pair 30th April to 4th May and same or another pair, 21st-23rd June, at suitable site; (3) up to three in July and August at potential breeding site.

Scotland, S

One locality: pair from 4th July to 16th August, building four nest platforms, but did not breed.

Although no pairs bred this year, potential breeding activity is spreading, as far north as southern Scotland.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Nine localities: 3-8 pairs bred; hybrid pair nest-built.



Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus*.

Steve McQueen

Scotland, N & W

Nine localities: (1) pair bred, hatched five young and reared three; (2) pair bred and reared one young; (3) pair bred, but failed; (4)-(8) single non-breeding pairs; (9) an injured adult part-built a nest with a Mute Swan *C. olor*.

The above are all considered to be of wild origin, though some may have been injured birds unable to undertake their normal migration to Iceland. Only pairs are shown. In addition, up to 37 single birds were reported in summer at Scottish sites. Records of escaped birds are now included in the Panel's report on non-native breeding birds (*Brit. Birds* 95: in press).

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Breeding reports were received as follows:

England, SW

AVON Up to four males at one locality. SOMERSET Three birds at one locality.

England, SE

ESSEX Pair probably bred; single pairs at four other localities.

England, E

CAMBRIDGESHIRE 11 pairs and 13 males at four localities. NORFOLK One to six birds noted at ten localities, no breeding attempts. SUFFOLK One to three birds at nine localities.

England, Central

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Seven pairs and a male at three localities. WARWICKSHIRE One pair.

England, N

CHESHIRE Birds summered at four localities. CUMBRIA One summering pair. NORTHUMBERLAND At least seven pairs bred at three localities. YORKSHIRE A pair and up to 44 males summered at four localities.

Wales

ANGLESEY Birds summered at three localities. FLINT Two pairs and four males summered.

Scotland, S

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY One summering pair.

Scotland, Mid

ANGUS & DUNDEE Five broods at three localities. CLYDE One to four birds at five localities, no evidence of breeding. FIFE Birds at seven localities, no evidence of breeding. MORAY & NAIRN One pair bred and second pair present at one locality, single pairs at two others. NORTHEAST Five pairs, including four broods, at two localities. PERTH & KINROSS Seven broods seen at four localities, possible breeding at four others.

Scotland, N & W

ARGYLL Two pairs bred at one locality, birds present at two others. ORKNEY 12 broods seen at eight localities, breeding suspected at five more. SHETLAND Pairs bred at two localities. WESTERN ISLES Thirty pairs noted, and 11 broods seen.

An increase in both the number of pairs reported, and the number of sites where successful breeding occurred in Scotland. The most recent estimate of the British population is 300-500 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Reports of pairs in the breeding season were received as follows:

England, SW

AVON Five pairs. DEVON One pair. GLOUCESTERSHIRE 51 pairs. HAMPSHIRE 25 pairs. SOMERSET 60 pairs.

England, SE

ESSEX 26 pairs. GREATER LONDON Seven pairs. HERTFORDSHIRE 40+ pairs. KENT 97 pairs. SURREY Four pairs. SUSSEX 21+ pairs.

England, E

CAMBRIDGESHIRE 145 pairs. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH 35 pairs. NORFOLK 91+ pairs. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE 13 pairs. SUFFOLK 56 pairs.

England, Central

DERBYSHIRE 31 pairs. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Three pairs. SHROPSHIRE One pair. STAFFORDSHIRE Six pairs. WARWICKSHIRE 20 pairs.

England, N

CHESHIRE 47 pairs. CLEVELAND Two pairs. CUMBRIA Five pairs. GREATER MANCHESTER 13 pairs. LANCASHIRE 11 pairs. NORTHUMBERLAND Nine pairs. YORKSHIRE 36 pairs.

Wales

ANGLESEY Five pairs. CAERNARFON One pair. FLINT One pair. GWENT Two pairs. PEMBROKE One pair.

Scotland, S

BORDERS Four pairs. DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY One pair.

Scotland, Mid

ANGUS & DUNDEE 23 pairs. AYRSHIRE One pair. CLYDE Nine pairs. FIFE Five pairs. MORAY & NAIRN One pair. PERTH & KINROSS 70+ pairs.

Scotland, N & W

ARGYLL Two pairs. ORKNEY 11 pairs. SHETLAND Eight pairs. WESTERN ISLES Four pairs.

The total of at least 1,000 pairs reported is easily the highest ever and is in part due to much better reporting from Scotland. There are still some gaps in the coverage from both England and Wales, but nearly all the more important counties are included above. The most recent estimate of the British population is about 770 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

15 localities: 10-26 pairs breeding.

England, SE

Three localities: 0-3 pairs. KENT Two localities: (1)(2) single pairs stayed into early June. OXFORDSHIRE One locality: pair probably bred.

England, E

Three localities: 0-4 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: two pairs, breeding not proved. SUFFOLK Two localities: (1)(2) single pairs in May, males seen into June.

Scotland, Mid

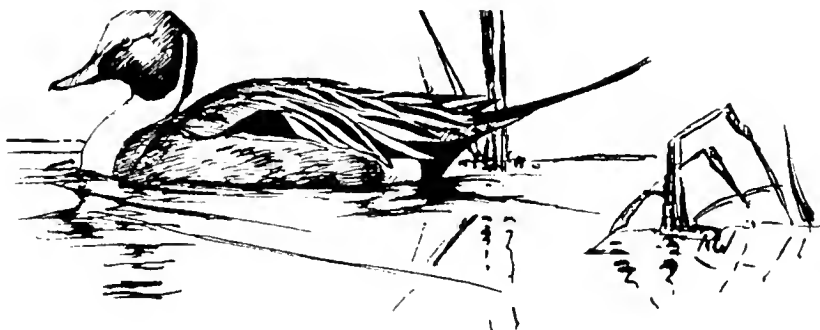
Two localities: 0-2 pairs. ANGUS & DUNDEE One locality: pair stayed into June. NORTHEAST One locality: pair stayed into June.

Scotland, N & W

Seven localities: 10-17 pairs. ARGYLL One locality: two pairs, one probably bred. ORKNEY Six localities: (1) seven pairs bred; (2) two pairs bred; (3) one pair bred; (4)(5) two pairs probably bred; (6) single pair probably bred.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	20	28	23	23	49	25	33	22	28	25	15
Confirmed (pairs)	9	4	13	4	20	11	8	5	13	22	10
Possible/ probable (pairs)	27	39	35	43	56	34	45	28	37	15	16
Max. total pairs	36	43	48	47	76	45	53	33	50	37	26

A poor year, although this is at least partly because of reduced coverage in Orkney, which holds a high proportion of the British population.



Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*.

Rosemary Watts/Powell

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

52 localities: 30-109 pairs breeding.

England, SW

Seven localities: 2-14 pairs. DEVON One locality: one pair. GLOUCESTERSHIRE Two localities: pair bred, one other pair. SOMERSET Four localities: pair bred, ten other pairs.

England, SE

12 localities: 3-24 pairs. ESSEX Three localities: four pairs. KENT Eight localities: three pairs bred, 12 other pairs. OXFORDSHIRE One locality: five pairs.

England, E

13 localities: 18-47 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE Three localities: 13 pairs bred, 21 other pairs. NORFOLK Four localities: two pairs bred, five other pairs. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Two localities: pair bred, one other pair. SUFFOLK Four localities: two pairs bred, two other pairs.

England, Central

Five localities: 1-5 pairs. DERBYSHIRE Two localities: pair bred, plus one pair. SHROPSHIRE One locality: one pair. STAFFORDSHIRE One locality: one pair. WARWICKSHIRE One locality: one pair.

England, N

Seven localities: 6-11 pairs. CUMBRIA Two localities: two pairs. LANCASHIRE Two localities: pair bred, one other pair. YORKSHIRE Three localities: five pairs bred, two other pairs.

Wales

Three localities: 0-3 pairs. ANGLESEY One locality: one pair. GWENT One locality: one pair. PEMBROKE One locality: one pair.

Scotland, N & W

Five localities: 0-5 pairs. ARGYLL Two localities: two pairs. ORKNEY Two localities: two pairs. WESTERN ISLES One locality: one pair.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	87	90	90	73	65	80	60	85	86	77	52
Confirmed (pairs)	14	12	16	14	13	9	15	10	22	37	30
Possible/ probable (pairs)	97	82	144	149	98	108	63	119	122	71	79
Max. total pairs	111	94	160	163	111	117	78	129	144	108	109

A very similar year to 1999 in terms of the actual totals, but the number of localities with pairs decreased significantly. Some of the drop may, however, be attributed to County Recorders being selective in submitting records, omitting sightings of males and early pairs, which may be on passage.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

545 pairs.

England, SW

40 pairs. AVON 12 pairs. DEVON One pair (the first breeding record for the county). HAMPSHIRE 17 pairs. SOMERSET 10 pairs.

England, SE

282 pairs. ESSEX 133 pairs. GREATER LONDON Three pairs. HERTFORDSHIRE 13 pairs. KENT 119 pairs. OXFORDSHIRE Nine pairs. SURREY Five pairs.

England, E

82 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE 33 pairs. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH One pair. LINCOLNSHIRE One pair. NORFOLK 28+ pairs. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Two pairs. SUFFOLK 17 pairs.

England, Central

24 pairs. DERBYSHIRE Two pairs. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE 14 pairs. SHROPSHIRE Three pairs. WARWICKSHIRE Two pairs. WEST MIDLANDS Two pairs. WORCESTERSHIRE One pair.

England, N

71 pairs. CHESHIRE 22 pairs. CLEVELAND Five pairs. CUMBRIA One pair. GREATER MANCHESTER Two

pairs. LANCASHIRE 19 pairs. NORTHUMBERLAND Three pairs bred. YORKSHIRE 19 pairs.

Wales

33 pairs. ANGLESEY 19 pairs. CAERNARFON One pair. CARMARTHEN Two pairs. GWENT 11 pairs.

Scotland, S

Three pairs. BORDERS Three pairs.

Scotland, Mid

Seven pairs. ANGUS & DUNDEE Two pairs. PERTH & KINROSS Five pairs.

Scotland, N & W

Three pairs. ORKNEY Three pairs.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Max. total pairs	293	428	558	416	638	494	369	380	444	394	545

A much better year with good reporting from important counties such as Essex and Kent, though more patchy elsewhere.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

16 localities: 2-59 pairs.

Scotland, Mid

Three localities: up to five pairs reported.

Scotland, N & W

ARGYLL Three localities: nine pairs reported. HIGHLAND Ten localities: 45 pairs, two with broods of chicks, located on a sample of waters.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	9	14	32	38	47	61	10	8	16	49	16
Confirmed (pairs)	6	9	9	16	5	nc	11	2	6	14	2
Possible/ probable (pairs)	23	21	62	72	79	76-89	32	33	35	44	57
Max. total pairs	29	30	71	88	84	89	43	35	41	58	59

Only a sample of waters was checked this year, although this included two of the most important sites in the Flow Country, which held 14 and 13 pairs, respectively. The last full census was in 1995 (Underhill *et al.* 1998), when the British and Irish population was estimated to be 195 pairs.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Only sample data are available from nestbox schemes in Highland.

England, E

Two localities: 0-2 pairs. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Two localities: single summering birds.

England, Central

Three localities: 0-3 pairs. DERBYSHIRE One locality: female and immature male summered. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Two localities: single summering females.

England, N

Four localities: 0-4 pairs. CUMBRIA Three localities: one male and two females summered. LANCASHIRE One locality: male summered.

Scotland, S

No count of localities: 0-19 pairs. AYRSHIRE Seven summering birds. BORDERS Five summering birds. CLYDE Three summering birds. DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY Four summering birds.

Scotland, Mid

At least five localities: 2-10 pairs. CENTRAL One locality: pair bred. FIFE Three summering birds. MORAY &

NAIRN Two localities: pair plus two females, no evidence of breeding. NORTHEAST One locality: one pair bred. PERTH & KINROSS One locality: two pairs, no evidence of breeding.

Scotland, N & W

36 pairs. HIGHLAND Two localities: (1) Spey Valley including Insh Marshes: 34 nestboxes in use, no report of success; (2) Glen Urquhart: two pairs bred. There was no survey at the RSPB Abernethy reserve.

Summering by small numbers in England continues, but the breeding record in Borders in 1999 was not repeated this year.

European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

30 pairs breeding; minimum of 40 young reared.

Great Britain

15 pairs fledged two young, ten pairs fledged one young, five pairs bred but failed, one because the female was shot. There were an additional 11 pairs, including one displaying pair, one locality with two males, and eight localities with single birds, at least one of which showed breeding behaviour.

The breakdown of the above into countries is England (24 pairs bred, plus 19 probable/possible pairs), Wales (four pairs bred) and Scotland (two pairs bred, plus two probable/possible pairs).

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Confirmed (pairs)	3	2	8	6	9	9	14	14	17	13	30
Max. total pairs	19	22	26	27	28	30	34	39	37	43	51

The first-ever survey of this species in Britain was carried out in 2000, organised by the Panel, and Batten (2001) published a preliminary summary suggesting that there were 29 confirmed pairs and a further 29 probable or possible breeding pairs. The above totals reflect a full re-analysis of the records received. The findings reveal one more confirmed pair, but a reduction in the number of possible/probable pairs, mainly due to the discarding of observations of single birds which could have been wanderers from adjacent territories of known pairs or migrants. The total number of confirmed pairs is well in excess of any previous total reported to the Panel and reinforces the belief that this species has been considerably under-reported in the past. Unfortunately, the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in 2001 prevented the planned repeat of the survey, but it is hoped that observers will continue both to record and report breeding-season observations of European Honey-buzzards from now on.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Wild and re-established populations. 201 pairs bred in Wales and raised 141 young, and at least 171 breeding pairs from released stock in England and Scotland reared at least 310 young. The year 2000 saw the first combined UK survey of this species using methods agreed by the UK Red Kite Steering Group.

Wales

201 pairs were proved to breed and there were a further 48 non-breeding pairs. Of these, 103 were successful, rearing 141 young. Although the total number of pairs rose, the number of successful pairs, and the number of young reared, fell below the levels in either 1999 or 1998, the main reason for this is believed to be the cold and wet weather during much of May. Mean brood size was low and 90 nests were known to have failed completely. Counts of unmated birds in spring and of the total population in spring and autumn were not undertaken, as it has been decided that their accuracy had fallen below an acceptable level with little possibility of improvement as the population continues to increase and spread.

Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2000

Wales	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Total pairs	84	92	101	115	138	146	161	180	200	228	249
Breeding pairs	65	76	84	104	111	127	130	152	167	181	201
Successful pairs	47	41	60	61	70	79	90	99	112	118	103
Young reared	73	62	96	82	99	117	119	129	174	165	141
Young/territorial pair	0.9	0.7	1.0	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.9	0.7	0.6

The Panel wishes to thank the Welsh Kite Trust for the above information.

England, S

A total of 109 breeding pairs and a further 17 territorial pairs were located, with over 200 young reared. This population has become increasingly hard to survey, but it is believed that the breeding population lay between 96 and 124 pairs, and the total number between 107 and 145. These totals include a pair which bred outside the main southern England breeding area, rearing two young.

England, Central

In the East Midlands release area, all 16 territorial pairs bred, of which ten were successful, rearing 22 young (1.4/pair).

England, N

The first release, of 23 birds from the Chilterns, took place in 1999. Already in 2000, three pairs, two of which comprised first-year birds, laid eggs but none hatched. A third pair, consisting of a first-year male and an older female, rescued from illegal captivity and rehabilitated, reared two young. Nineteen more birds from the Chilterns were released in 2000.

England	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Total territorial pairs	2	7	12	22	26	nc	61	87	nc	146
Breeding pairs	2	4	9	20	24	37+	57	76	83	131+
Successful pairs	0	4	8	17	22	nc	50	67	78	nc
Young reared	0	9	14	37	55	80	111	146	172	226+
Young/territorial pair	–	1.3	1.2	1.7	2.1	–	1.8	1.7	–	1.5

Scotland, Central

Eight breeding pairs reared a total of ten young.

Scotland, N

Of the 36 pairs located, 32 bred and 30 of these were successful, fledging 74 young (2.1/pair). Although the number of pairs is only rising very slowly, partly because of the effects of illegal persecution, the breeding success was the best so far recorded.

Scotland	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Total territorial pairs	2	8	11	17	22	27	30	39	44
Breeding pairs	1	5	8	15	17	23	25	36	40
Successful pairs	1	3	6	11	16	19	22	26	38
Young reared	1	7	13	26	39	39	47	59	84
Young/territorial pair	0.5	0.9	1.2	1.5	1.8	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.9

Re-establishment in England continues apace, with very rapid breeding at the new Yorkshire release site. It was a very successful year at both Scottish release sites, though the number of pairs in north Scotland continues to grow disappointingly slowly. The Panel is grateful to English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage and the RSPB for the above information.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Re-establishment.

Scotland

There was a total of 20 territory-holding pairs, plus a single bird with a territory. Between 18 and 20 pairs laid clutches and between 11 and 13 of these hatched young, but only eight pairs were successful, fledging 12 young (four broods of two and four of one). One failure was due to egg thieves, the remainder were thought to be natural, though human disturbance may have contributed at one nest.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Breeding pairs/ trios (min)	9	8	9	6	8	9	12	11	18	18	20-21
Clutches laid	9	8	9	6	8	9	12	11-13	16-17	15-16	18-20
Successful pairs	2	4	4	4	4	5	7	5	9	6	8
Young reared	2	7	7	5	5	7	9	9	13	11	12
Young/territorial pair	0.2	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.6

Although breeding success failed to improve on 1999, the slow increase in the number of pairs is encouraging. For the first time no trio was involved, as a new male appeared at the site which had formerly contained two females and one male, and a new pair was formed. Another welcome event was the successful breeding by a pair consisting of a three-year-old male and a four-year-old female (both released birds). Such early breeding in the re-established population is unprecedented. The Panel is grateful to the Sea Eagle Project Team for providing it with information. The Project is supported jointly by JNCC, SNH and the RSPB.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

183-206 pairs bred, rearing at least 377 young.

England, SW

Three localities: 0-4 pairs. HAMPSHIRE One locality: pair built nest but did not lay. ISLE OF WIGHT One locality: female nest-building, male present only briefly. SOMERSET One locality: two females.

England, SE

Eight localities or areas: 32-35 pairs. ESSEX One locality: pair fledged three young; many reports of summering individuals. KENT Six localities or areas: (1) 24 nests produced at least 21 young; (2) four pairs fledged 11 young; (3) Pair plus female attempted but failed; (4) pair fledged two young; (5) pair bred, success unknown; (6) pair present. SUSSEX One locality: pair present, did not breed.

England, E

26 localities or areas: 138-144 pairs bred. CAMBRIDGESHIRE Six localities: (1) nine pairs fledged at least 19 young; (2) two pairs bred, no young fledged; (3) pair fledged two young, second pair present; (4) pair fledged one young; (5) pair probably bred; (6) pair possibly bred. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH One locality: pair fledged three young. LINCOLNSHIRE Three areas: (1) 18 pairs fledged 42+ young; (2) 12 pairs fledged 37+ young; (3) 10 pairs fledged 30+ young. NORFOLK Eight localities or areas: (1) 21 pairs fledged 32+ young; (2) 17 pairs fledged 54 young; (3) 15 pairs fledged 27 young; (4) pair fledged two young, second female seen regularly; (5) pair fledged two young; (6) pair bred; (7) pair probably bred; (8) pair present. SUFFOLK Eight localities: (1) nine pairs fledged 22+ young; (2) eight pairs fledged 20+ young; (3) six pairs fledged 12 young; (4) pair fledged five young; (5) pair fledged three young; (6) pair fledged two young; (7) pair fledged one young; (8) pair bred but failed.

England, N

Ten localities: 7-14 pairs bred. CUMBRIA One locality: displaying male in June. LANCASHIRE Two localities: (1) one male and two females bred and fledged one young; (2) female summered. YORKSHIRE Seven localities: (1) three pairs fledged two young; (2) pair fledged three young; (3) pair fledged two young; (4)(5) single pairs present; (6) three birds present; (7) single present at former breeding site.

Wales

One locality: 0-1 pairs. ANGLESEY One locality: pair displaying and nest-building, no evidence of successful breeding.

Scotland, Mid

Five localities: 6-8 pairs. FIFE One locality: pair fledged four young. MORAY & NAIRN One locality: two summering females. NORTHEAST One locality: pair fledged four young. PERTH & KINROSS Two localities: (1) two pairs fledged six young; (2) male and two females bred and fledged two young.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Breeding males	73	83	92	84	114	151	135	131	137	145	184
Breeding females	110	91	107	110	129	156	136	132	138	145	206
Young	145	198	229	244	255	277	263	206	292	256	377

A substantial increase, both in the number of breeding birds and in the number of young reared. This is partly down to better coverage, but also to a genuine increase and spread. The breeding records in Fife and Northeast Scotland are both firsts for those areas. It should be noted that non-breeding birds are often not reported from the core areas of Norfolk and Lincolnshire, while production of young is, for many areas, a minimum.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

The following summary information has been received. For each area, the figures are based on a non-randomised sample rather than a complete survey.

Area	Occupied territories	Territories known to have fledged young	Min. no. young fledged	Min. young/territorial pair
England, Central	1	0	0	0
England, N (all counties)	14	9	13	0.93
Wales	19	8	28	1.47
Borders & Lothian	10	5	10	1.00
Dumfries & Galloway	18	13	41	2.28
South Strathclyde	30	8	21	0.70
Stirling	6	1	2	0.33
Angus	4	3	9	2.25
Perthshire	22	9	26	1.18
Northeast Scotland	13	8	26	2.00
Moray & Nairn	6	6	13	2.17
Argyll & Bute	32	16	58	1.81
Highland	19	22	47	2.47
Orkney	21	17	25	1.19
Western Isles	23	9	26	1.13
TOTALS	238	135	345	1.45

The total number of monitored territories rose compared with last year, and breeding success was very similar. The results of the national census in 1998 have been published (Sim *et al.* 2001). The total number of territorial pairs found by the census was 570 (range 499-640), little changed from the previous census in 1988. The Panel is grateful to the Scottish, Welsh and Cumbrian Raptor Study Groups, as well as to many individuals for the above information.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

18 localities: 9-19 pairs reared 7-8 young.

England, SW

Four localities: (1) two pairs bred unsuccessfully; (2) pair fledged one or two young; (3)(4) single males seen.

England, E

Eleven localities: (1)(2) pairs fledged three young; (3)-(6) three pairs and an additional female bred, but failed; (7)(8) pairs present; (9) immature pair in July; (10) female summered; (11) male in May-June.

England, Central

Two localities: (1) male in May; (2) female in June.

Wales

One locality: male present, including display.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	9	14	12	8	15	14	16	13	11	11	18
Breeding males	8	5	7	5	7	8	6	7	3	4	8
Other males	4	3	2	2	9	8	8	6	10	4	8
Breeding females	11	7	8	6	12	9	7	9	3	4	9
Other females	2	6	4	1	11	4	7	3	5	5	5
Young	20	14	12	9	13	26	14	11	8	12	7-8

Although the number of localities with birds was the highest since these reports began and the number of breeding birds rose from the low point in 1999, breeding success was extremely poor.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

At least 225 localities or areas: 237-322 pairs breeding.

England

At least 71 localities in 20 counties; 98 pairs known to have bred, plus 63 other pairs.

Wales

69 localities in seven counties: 69 pairs known to have bred, plus 7 other pairs.

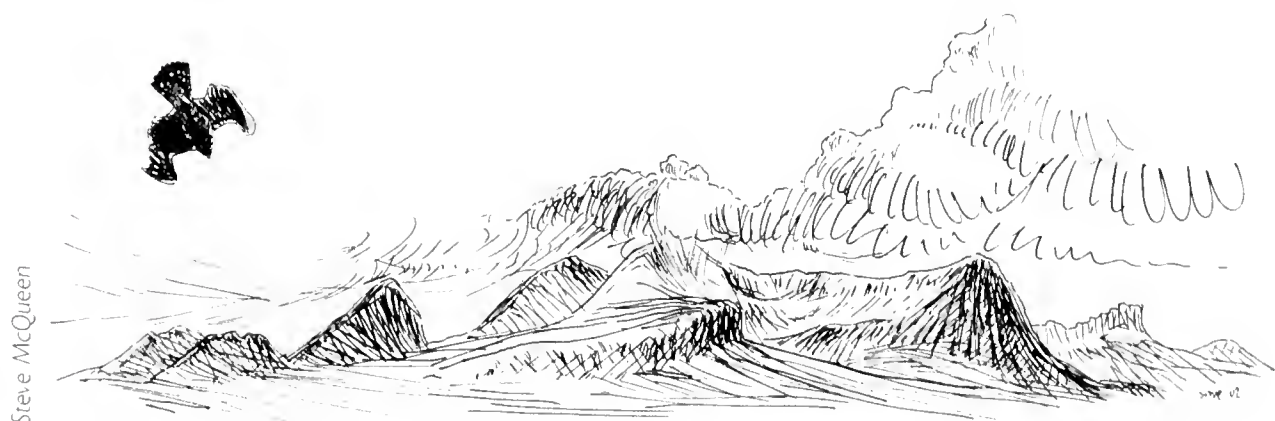
Scotland

85 localities in nine recording areas: 70 pairs known to have bred, plus 15 other pairs.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. counties	30	36	34	35	33	38	33	41	38	42	36
Confirmed (pairs)	93	158	150	199	145	249	160	247	179	198	237
Possible/ probable (pairs)	79	71	93	100	80	70	53	100	70	95	85
Max. total pairs	172	229	243	299	225	319	213	347	249	293	322

A further improvement in reporting from most areas, for which the Panel is grateful. We continue to urge that all information should be deposited with the Panel to assist the conservation of this species, not least by making available more-complete data on the scale of persecution.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*



Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* performing 'sky dance' display, Sutherland.

The following summary information has been received. For each area other than northern England, it is based on a non-randomised sample rather than a complete census. Productivity rose slightly from the low of 0.41 young/territorial pair of 1999, but was still poor. The Panel is grateful to the Scottish and Cumbrian Raptor Study Groups for much of the information given here.

Area	Occupied territories	Territories known to have fledged young	Min. no. young fledged	Min. young/territorial pair
England, N	1	0	0	0
Dumfries & Galloway Borders	2	1	1	0.50
Central Scotland	2	2	2	1.00
Tayside	10	4	4	0.40
Highland	13	6	9	0.69
Argyll	19	5	6	0.32
Highland	59	19	22	0.37
Highland	95	49	52	0.55
Western Isles	22	9	11	0.50
TOTALS	223	95	107	0.48

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

151 pairs with nests: 125 pairs laid eggs, rearing 209 young.

England, Central

RUTLAND: 12 more young were translocated from Scotland to Rutland Water, all of which fledged and left the area. A translocated chick from 1997 and an unringed female formed a pair and built a nest rather late in the season; no eggs were laid.

England, N

CUMBRIA Three localities: (1) pair fledged one young; (2)(3) pairs nest-built and one pair seen copulating, but no breeding attempts made.

Scotland, S

BORDERS One locality: pair fledged two young.

Scotland, Mid

CLYDE Pair fledged two young. FORTH Seven pairs laid of which six fledged 14 young. TAYSIDE 50 occupied territories, 36 clutches laid; 52 young fledged. ELSEWHERE 14 pairs laid, of which 12 fledged 28 young.

Scotland, N & W

ARGYLL Four pairs were all successful, fledging nine young. HIGHLAND 70 pairs were found of which 61 bred and 49 fledged 101 young.



Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* mobbed by Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Pairs with nests	62	73	76	88	95	99	104	111	131	136	151
Pairs with eggs	56	64	63	78	83	92	93	102	117	125	125
Successful pairs	44	44	47	56	69	73	74	77	93	87	nc
Young reared	90	82	103	111	146	146	155	159	194	183	209
Young/territorial pair	1.5	1.1	1.4	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.3	1.4

The highlight of the year was the successful nesting of a pair in Cumbria, the first known breeding of Ospreys in England for about 150 years. One of the translocated birds at Rutland Water got as far as nest-building with an unringed female.

The population in some areas of Scotland has now increased to the extent that it is becoming difficult to monitor all the pairs and their breeding success. The number of successful pairs in Tayside was unknown, while the total number of young reared is a minimum figure.

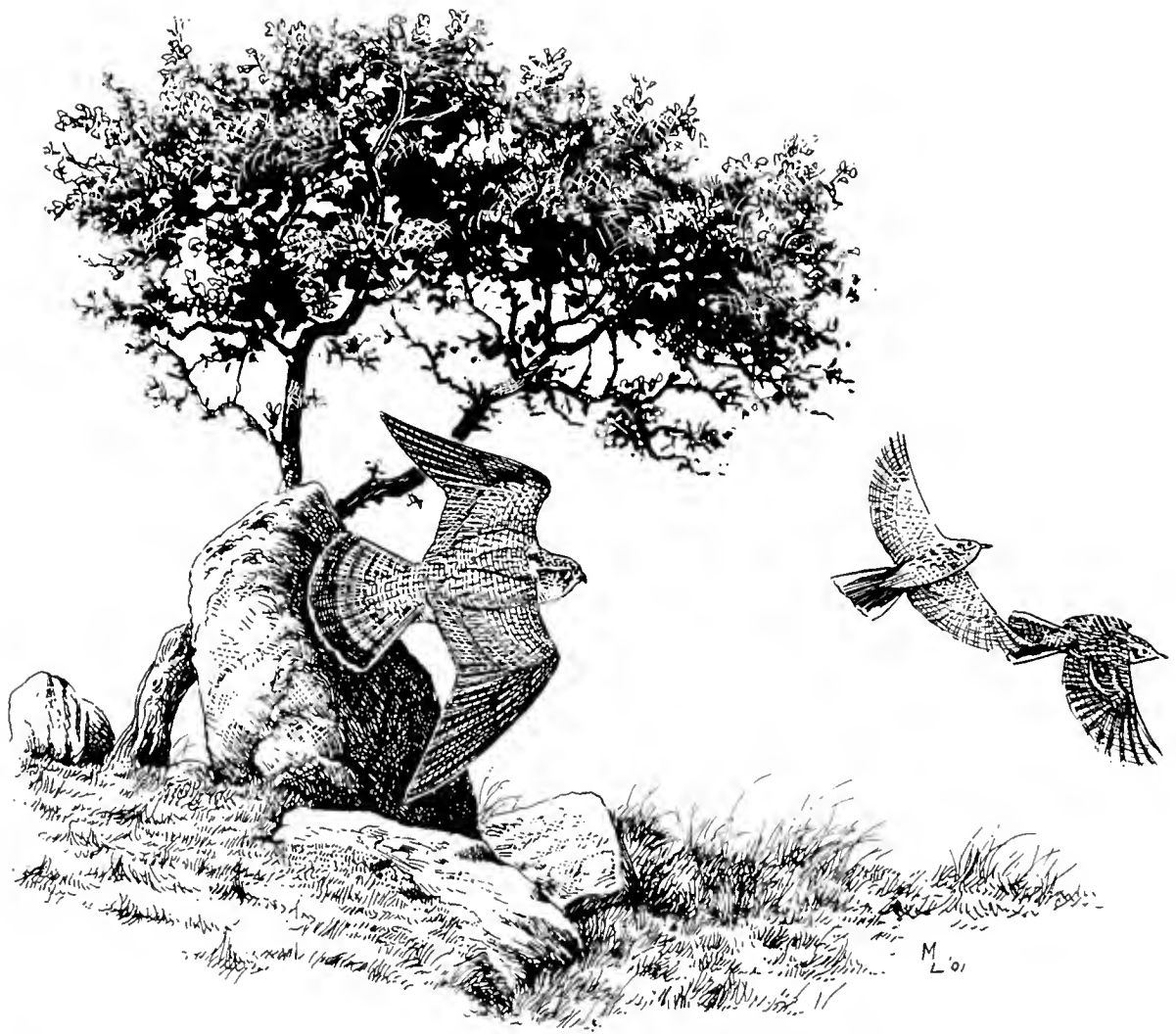
Breeding success was poor, with cold weather at the start of April disrupting the return migration, and resulting in several regular sites being unoccupied. Successful breeding again took place in southern Scotland. The Panel is grateful for the information supplied to it by the Osprey Study Group and the Scottish Raptor Study Groups.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

The following summary information has been received. For each area, it is based on a non-randomised sample rather than a complete census.

Area	Occupied territories	Territories known to have fledged young	Min. no. young fledged	Min. young/territorial pair
England, SW	1	0	0	0
England, Central	15	5	11	0.73
England, N	65	43	92	1.42
Wales	28	11	31	1.11
Borders & Lothian	26	16	57	2.19
Dumfries & Galloway	9	5	10	1.11
South Strathclyde	0	0	0	0
Angus	18	12	44	2.44
Stirling	3	0	0	0
Perthshire	20	13	31	1.55
Northeast Scotland	31	22	82	2.65
Argyll & Bute	8	4	13	1.63
Highland	43	29	109	2.53
Orkney	8	4	13	1.63
Shetland	10	8	27	2.70
Western Isles	9	9	31	3.44
TOTALS	294	181	551	1.87

The number of occupied territories and breeding pairs was well down on previous years, although coverage in northern England in particular was lower. Breeding success was very similar to that in previous years. The Panel is grateful to the Cumbria and Scottish Raptor Study Groups and many individuals for the information included in the table. The most recent estimate of the British population is 1,300 (1,100-1,500) pairs in 1993-94 (Rebecca & Bainbridge 1998).



Mike Langman

Merlin *Falco columbarius* chasing Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis*.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Minimum of 381-711 pairs breeding.

England, SW

32-137 pairs. AVON 4-15 pairs. DEVON 12-19 pairs. DORSET 1+ pairs. GLOUCESTERSHIRE five pairs. HAMPSHIRE 8-65 pairs. ISLE OF WIGHT 0-2 pairs. SOMERSET 2-30 pairs.

England, SE

250-334 pairs. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE four pairs. ESSEX 20-30 pairs. GREATER LONDON 4-7 pairs. KENT 175-200 pairs. OXFORDSHIRE 6-7 pairs. SUSSEX 41-86 pairs.

England, E

44-111 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE 12-19 pairs. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH 3-12 pairs. NORFOLK 10-16 pairs. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE 12-25 pairs. SUFFOLK 7-39 pairs.

England, Central

36-92 pairs. DERBYSHIRE 22-24 pairs. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE four pairs. SHROPSHIRE 3-30 pairs. WARWICKSHIRE 4-30 pairs. WEST MIDLANDS 1-2 pairs. WORCESTERSHIRE two pairs.

England, N

9-26 pairs. CHESHIRE 5-7 pairs. CUMBRIA 0-1 pairs. LANCASHIRE 0-2 pairs. NORTHUMBERLAND 2-4 pairs. YORKSHIRE 2-12 pairs.

Wales

10-11 pairs. BRECON One pair. GWENT four pairs. RADNOR 5-6 pairs.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Confirmed (pairs)	154	159	255	152	170	161	190	167	161	246	381
Possible/ probable (pairs)	287	310	327	341	330	269	264	457	514	307	330
Max. total pairs	441	469	582	493	500	430	454	624	675	553	711

A record number of confirmed and total pairs, helped by a full survey of Kent which found many more Hobbies than had been suspected there previously. This total is still well below a recent estimate of the total British breeding population of 2,200 pairs (Clements 2001), which was derived by extrapolation from known breeding densities in well-studied areas.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

The following summary information has been received. For each area, it is based on a non-randomised sample rather than a complete census.

Area	Occupied territories	Territories known to have produced clutches	Min. no. young fledged	Min. young/occupied territory
England, SW	75	27	57	0.76
England, SE	28	12	24	0.86
England, Central	48	28	54	1.13
England, N	130	67	163	1.25
Wales	126	60	132	1.05
Borders & Lothian	51	23	54	1.06
Dumfries & Galloway	78	48	103	1.32
South Strathclyde/Arran	25	13	30	1.20
Angus	34	26	26	0.76
Central	23	18	38	1.65
Perthshire	36	27	48	1.33
Northeast Scotland	36	12	21	0.58
Moray & Nairn	12	3	4	0.33
Argyll	16	13	24	1.50
Highland	20	13	20	1.00
Orkney	15	3	5	0.33
Western Isles	0	0	0	0.00
TOTALS	753	393	803	1.07

The number of pairs reported has fallen for the second year running, with reduced reporting from several areas of England. Breeding success was poor over much of the country. The Panel is grateful to the Scottish Raptor Study Groups for most of the Scottish information, and to the English and Welsh Raptor Study Groups. The most recent estimate of the UK Peregrine population is 1,263 pairs in 1991 (Crick & Ratcliffe 1995). A more up-to-date figure will soon be available from the national survey held in 2002 (postponed from 2001).

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

2-203 pairs breeding.

England, SW

0-20 pairs. AVON Three singing males. DEVON One singing male. GLOUCESTERSHIRE Five singing males. HAMPSHIRE Seven singing males. SOMERSET Four singing males.

England, SE

0-7 pairs. ESSEX Three singing males. KENT Four singing males.

England, E

1-58 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE Ten singing males. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH Two singing males. NORFOLK One brood seen and 34 singing males. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Five singing males. SUFFOLK Six singing males.

England, Central

0-25 pairs. DERBYSHIRE Four singing males. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Three singing males. SHROPSHIRE Nine singing males. STAFFORDSHIRE Two singing males. WARWICKSHIRE Six singing males. WORCESTERSHIRE One singing male.

England, N

0-42 pairs. CHESHIRE Three singing males. CLEVELAND 12 singing males. GREATER MANCHESTER One singing male. LANCASHIRE Ten singing males. NORTHUMBERLAND Six singing males. YORKSHIRE Ten singing males.

Wales

0-5 pairs. ANGLESEY Two singing males. CAERNARFON One singing male. CEREDIGION One singing male. RADNOR One singing male.

Scotland, S

1-23 pairs. BORDERS One brood seen and 20 singing males. DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY Two singing males.

Scotland, Mid

0-18 pairs. ANGUS & DUNDEE Two singing males. FIFE Three singing males. MORAY & NAIRN Five singing males. NORTHEAST Eight singing males.

Scotland, N & W

0-5 pairs. ORKNEY Three singing males. SHETLAND Two singing males.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Confirmed (pairs)	13	2	9	1	8	15	5	4	5	5	2
Possible/ probable (pairs)	364	105	481	202	604	500	330	863	523	312	201
Max. total pairs	377	107	490	203	612	515	335	867	528	317	203

Overall, a much worse year even than 1999, mainly as a result of particularly low numbers in the southern half of England. In northern England and southern Scotland, the number of singing males was comparable with 1999.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

22 localities: 3 pairs bred or probably bred, plus 31 singing males or individuals.

England, SW

Four localities: pair probably bred, plus five singing males. GLOUCESTERSHIRE Two localities: (1) three singing males in early May only; (2) singing male in mid May only. SOMERSET Two localities: (1) juvenile seen 28th July – probable breeding record; (2) singing male in mid May only.

England, E

Six localities: ten singing males. CAMBRIDGESHIRE Three localities: (1) five singing males; (2)(3) single singing males. NORFOLK Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males. SUFFOLK One locality: singing male.

England, N

Five localities: pair bred, plus four singing males. CHESHIRE One locality: singing male. LANCASHIRE One locality: singing male. NORTHUMBERLAND Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males. YORKSHIRE One locality: pair bred – downy chick seen.

Scotland, Mid

Two localities: three singing males. NORTHEAST Two localities: (1) two singing males; (2) one singing male.

Scotland, N & W

Five localities: pair bred, plus nine singing males or individuals. ARGYLL One locality: singing male. HIGHLAND One locality: pair bred, plus four other singing males. ORKNEY One locality: two singing males, breeding suspected. WESTERN ISLES Two localities: (1) singing male; (2) casual record of one in late July.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. counties	5	5	9	12	4	5	5	7	11	25	14
No. localities	10	7	12	19	5	8	8	13	16	40	22
No. pairs/singing males	17	14	14	31	11	10	13	14	31	46-77	34

Following the first-ever census of this species in Britain in 1999 (Gilbert 2002), it was inevitable that the totals found this year would fall back, though it is welcome that both the number of localities and birds are above the level of 1998.

Corn Crake *Crex crex*

622 pairs or singing males.

England, E

One locality: one singing male. NORFOLK One locality: singing male, 1st May only.

England, Central

One locality: one singing male. DERBYSHIRE One locality: singing male, 8th-12th July.

Scotland, S

One locality: one singing male. BORDERS One locality: singing male, 14th June.

Scotland, Mid

Two localities: two singing males. CENTRAL Two localities: (1) singing male, 21st-22nd June; (2) singing male, 8th July.

Scotland, N & W: Mainland

Three main areas: 24 singing males. CAITHNESS Total of nine singing males in suitable habitat. SUTHERLAND Total of 13 singing males in suitable habitat. WEST INVERNESS Two singing males in May.

Scotland, N & W: Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland

16 localities or areas: 593 singing males.

Totals of singing males: HIGHLAND – INNER HEBRIDES 26 (Skye 23, Muck 3), STRATHCLYDE – INNER HEBRIDES 244 (Coll 53, Tiree 153, Mull 0, Iona 9, Colonsay & Oronsay 21, Islay 8), ORKNEY 11, SHETLAND 2, WESTERN ISLES 310 (Lewis 55, Harris 3, Berneray 1, North Uist 66, Benbecula 31, South Uist 98, Barra & Vatersay 56).

The total of 593 singing males on all Scottish islands shows a further increase over 1999 and is the second highest recorded since regular monitoring began in 1988. Overall, there were increases on seven islands, including a welcome return to Muck after a gap of five years, and declines on seven. Numbers on the mainland of Scotland also continue to rise slowly and there were the usual scattered records from farther south. The Panel is grateful to RSPB for all the island data above.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

One extensive locality.

England, E

NORFOLK One locality: four pairs nested, but no young were reared, with predation of both eggs and young occurring.

It is disappointing to report a breeding failure after three consecutive successful years.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

One locality: single male present.

England, E

One locality: male present all year.

The single bird present at Titchwell, Norfolk, for the last seven years remained throughout 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 468).

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

39 localities: 980-1,020 pairs reared a minimum of 172 young.

England, SE

13 localities: 373-393 pairs. ESSEX Six localities: (1) 60-80 pairs bred; (2) 51 pairs bred; (3) 49 pairs, 11 of which

fledged 29 young; (4) seven pairs bred; (5) three pairs bred; (6) one pair bred. KENT Seven localities: (1) 55 pairs present; (2) 41 pairs bred of which 33 successful; (3) 40 pairs bred; (4) 33 pairs bred; (5) 24 pairs bred, one young fledged; (6) 8 pairs bred; (7) pair fledged four young.

England, E

24 localities: 585-605 pairs. LINCOLNSHIRE One locality: 50 pairs. NORFOLK 15 localities: (1) 60-80 pairs bred, two young fledged; (2) 53 pairs bred, 15 young fledged; (3) 52 pairs bred, 26 young fledged; (4) 37 pairs bred, 11 young fledged; (5) 36 pairs bred; (6) 26 pairs bred, all nests washed out, 11 relays fledged 12 young; (7) 24 pairs bred, four young fledged; (8) 12 pairs bred; (9) nine pairs bred, three young fledged; (10) five pairs bred, four young fledged; (11) four pairs bred, three young fledged; (12)(13) three pairs bred; (14) two pairs bred, two young fledged; (15) pair bred. SUFFOLK Eight localities: (1) 98 pairs bred, eight young fledged; (2) 75 pairs bred, seven young fledged; (3) 13 pairs bred, six young fledged; (4) eight pairs bred, nine young fledged; (5) eight pairs bred, three young fledged; (6) four pairs bred, all failed; (7) pair bred, two young fledged; (8) pair bred, one young fledged.

England, N

Two localities: 22 pairs. CUMBRIA One locality: pair bred, three young fledged. YORKSHIRE One locality: 21 pairs bred, 17 young fledged.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	21	21	29	25	29	25	25	35	48	36	39
Confirmed (pairs)	355	448	492	436	623	613	592	654	834	655	980
Young reared (min.)	200	305	336	347	181	149	189	238	536	444	172

A record number of pairs bred, but even though the number of young fledging is not known for several colonies, it is apparent from the results of those where this information is available that 2000 was a disastrous breeding season, with large numbers of nests washed out by heavy rain and/or spring high tides.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Five counties: 253-270 pairs fledged a minimum of 168 young.

England, SW

64-79 pairs. HAMPSHIRE 22 pairs, 20 of which bred, 18 young fledged. WILTSHIRE 57 pairs, of which 44 bred, 29 young fledged.

England, SE

Seven pairs. BERKSHIRE Seven pairs bred, eight young fledged.

England, E

182-184 pairs. NORFOLK Brecks: 88 pairs bred, fledging 49 young. Elsewhere: seven pairs bred. SUFFOLK Brecks: 86 pairs, 84 of which bred and fledged 58 young. Elsewhere: three pairs bred, six young fledged.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Confirmed (pairs)	139	139	155	146	141	165	174	192	215	235	253
Possible/ probable (pairs)	10	16	4	16	32	9	14	11	11	11	17
Max. total pairs	149	155	159	162	173	174	188	203	226	246	270
Min. no. of young fledged	112	123	111	101	91	164	155	167	165	163	168

Although there were no breeding records from Cambridgeshire and Oxfordshire in 2000, the number of breeding pairs elsewhere continues to increase. A record number of breeding pairs nested in 2000 and produced a record number of young, though breeding success per pair actually fell. The Panel wishes to thank Dr Rhys Green for his assistance in compiling the data.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

The following summary information has been received. For each area, it is based on a non-randomised sample rather than a complete census.

Area	Possible/ probable pairs	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs
England, SW	18	12	30
England, SE	14	46	60
England, E	6	44	50
England, Central	28	104	132
England, N	81	122	203
Wales	55	14	69
Scotland, Mid	0	1	1
TOTALS	202	343	545

The total number of pairs is a considerable reduction on the 636 recorded in 1999. This species' habit of breeding adventitiously on industrial and waste sites makes accurate reporting difficult in some areas. The most recent estimate of the British population was 825-1,070 pairs in 1991 (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

No reports were received from outside main Scottish breeding areas. The Panel seeks records only away from the main breeding range, which lies north of a line from the Firth of Clyde to the Firth of Tay and holds in the region of 840-950 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).



Male Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus* feigning injury near the nest, Cairngorm.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Two localities: up to three pairs.

Scotland, N & W

Two localities: (1) two males displaying in mid June, no females seen; (2) single male displaying in May.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
Confirmed (pairs)	1	0	1	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Possible/ probable (pairs)	1	3	1	1	2	2	1	2	3	4	3
Max. total pairs	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	4	3

There were birds at two localities for the second year running, though no females were seen at either.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

One locality: one bird.

Scotland, N & W

One locality: single bird seen during the breeding season.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1
Confirmed (pairs)	1	3	1	1	4	1	2	3	2	0	0
Possible/ probable (pairs)	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Max. total pairs	1	4	2	1	4	1	2	3	3	1	1

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Five localities: one pair probably bred, plus four leks.

England, SE

Two localities: pair probably bred, plus one lek. KENT Two localities: (1) pair almost certainly attempted to breed as display and copulation were seen and the female was present throughout the summer, but no young were seen; (2) three males lekking in early May, but not seen thereafter.

England, N

Three localities: three leks. LANCASHIRE Two localities: (1) lek of 11 males in late April; (2) lek of seven males in late April. YORKSHIRE One locality: lek of nine males with two females, no other signs of breeding.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	8	9	21	10	13	7	8	6	5	3	5
No. of leks	1	4	7	7	3	3	3	5	2	3	4
Nests/broods	3	7	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0-1

A probable breeding record was the highlight of an otherwise poor year, in which there were no reports of leks from formerly regular sites in eastern England, although birds did return to sites in northern England which were empty in 1999.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

17 localities: 39-49 pairs breeding.

England, SE

Three localities: 4-5 pairs bred. KENT Two localities: (1) two pairs bred, no young fledged; (2) two pairs bred, success unknown. SUSSEX One locality: pair in suitable habitat, but did not breed.

England, E

Three localities: 26-28 pairs bred. CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: (1) 24 pairs fledged six young; (2) two pairs bred, but failed, third pair present. SUFFOLK One locality: pair seen displaying, but no evidence of nesting.

England, N

Five localities: 4-8 pairs bred. LANCASHIRE Three localities: (1) three pairs bred, at least one successful; (2) two pairs holding territory, did not breed; (3) pair displaying, did not breed. YORKSHIRE Two localities: (1) pair fledged one young; (2) pair displaying, but site flooded.

Scotland, N & W

Six localities: 5-8 pairs bred.

ORKNEY Three localities: (1) three pairs bred fledging at least two young; (2)(3) single pairs probably bred. SHETLAND Three localities: (1)(2) single pairs bred, both failed; (3) pair present, probably did not breed.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	16	18	24	16	22	15	12	11	13	18	17
Confirmed (pairs)	33	28	20	28	20	28	34	42	38	45	39
Possible/ probable (pairs)	33	25	38	5	16	7	7	5	12	8	10
Max. total pairs	66	53	58	33	36	35	41	47	50	53	49

Although breeding success was very poor, mainly because of floods at critical times, the population is still above the level of the mid 1990s.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Away from the species' stronghold in Orkney and Shetland: one pair bred, plus two territory-holding singles.

Wales

GWYNEDD One locality: a pair bred and fledged three young.

Scotland, N

Two localities: two singles. HIGHLAND Two localities: (1)(2) singles in suitable habitat, one where breeding suspected in the past.

A first breeding record for Wales at the same location at which a pair held territory in 1999. The Scottish population is estimated at 530 pairs (Stone *et al.* 1997).

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

The following limited information was received.

Scotland, N & W

HIGHLAND 53 pairs reported from 15 localities. SHETLAND Two pairs reported. WESTERN ISLES 26 pairs reported.

This is a particularly difficult species to survey accurately, and all records from likely breeding areas would be welcome. In particular, information from birdwatchers visiting the Highlands, who see or hear display or song, can help to supplement the survey information from local observers in this vast and underwatched region. The Scottish population is estimated at 1,100-1,600 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

One locality: one pair.

Scotland, N & W

HIGHLAND One locality: pair bred, fledging two young.

A pair bred for the second year running at the same locality. The only confirmed breeding record prior to 1999 was in Inverness-shire in 1959 (*Brit. Birds* 52: 430-432).

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Three localities: 4-6 pairs bred.

Scotland, Mid

One locality: adult seen in mid June.

Scotland, N & W

Two localities: (1) four pairs bred, but success unknown; (2) birds present at regular site.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	2	2	4	4	8	6	3	5	5	3	3
Confirmed (pairs)	1	1	1	2	6	7	8	0	8	2	4
Possible/ probable (pairs)	1	1	5	6	5	4	0	9	2	4	2
Max. total pairs	2	2	6	8	11	11	8	9	10	6	6

A poor year, although the lack of data from one regular site, which was occupied in 2000, weakens comparisons with past years.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Twelve localities: 13 breeding males reared 4+ young.

Scotland, N & W

12 localities. ARGYLL One locality: pair present at same site as in 1999, mating seen, but not thought to have bred. SHETLAND Three localities: (1)(2) Fetlar, nine breeding males, at least two young fledged; (3) four breeding males, at least two young fledged. WESTERN ISLES Eight localities: (1) five females in June, no males seen; (2) up to three females and two males; (3) agitated male and, later, pair; (4) up to three birds in May/June; (5) pair in early June; (6)(7) single birds in early June; (8) moulting bird in early July.

2000 was a very poor year in Shetland, with a decline in breeding birds (and the lowest total of males since at least 1990) and very low productivity. Last year's successful breeding in the Western Isles was not repeated, but there were several more sightings, including at new locations, which may bode well for the future.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

28 localities: 90-109 pairs.

England, SW

Five localities: 49-52 pairs. DORSET One locality: at least five pairs bred, success unknown. HAMPSHIRE Three localities: (1) 38 pairs fledged 41 young; (2) pair present, did not breed; (3) two pairs present, but not after mid May. ISLE OF WIGHT One locality: six pairs bred, but all failed.

England, SE

10 localities: 33-37 pairs. ESSEX Five localities: (1) three pairs bred, one young fledged; (2) two pairs bred, but failed; (3) two pairs, did not breed; (4)(5) single pairs, did not breed. KENT Three localities: (1) ten pairs bred, success unknown; (2) eight pairs bred, all failed; (3) five pairs bred, success unknown. SUSSEX Two localities: (1) four pairs fledged six young; (2) pair fledged two young.

England, E

Seven localities: 8-13 pairs. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH Two localities: (1)(2) single summering birds in Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus* colonies. NORFOLK Three localities: (1) two pairs bred, success unknown; (2) three pairs displaying, but did not breed; (3) pair started to breed, but deserted. SUFFOLK Two localities: (1) three pairs fledged three young; (2) two pairs fledged two young.

England, N

Six localities: 0-7 pairs. CHESHIRE One locality: pair nest-built, but did not breed. CUMBRIA Two localities: (1) three summering birds in Black-headed Gull colony; (2) two summering birds in Black-headed Gull colony. GREATER MANCHESTER One locality: pair held territory but did not lay. LANCASHIRE One locality: two summering birds. YORKSHIRE One locality: pair displaying, but area washed out.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	10	13	15	14	16	16	18	24	27	28	28
Confirmed (pairs)	11	15	19	15	16	18	31	33	54	60	90
Possible/ probable (pairs)	5	8	12	17	14	10	14	20	11	19	19
Max. total pairs	16	23	31	32	30	28	45	53	65	79	109

A substantial increase in the number of breeding pairs, but heavy rain and high tides meant that overall productivity was relatively poor. No mixed pairings with Black-headed Gull were reported for the first time in several years.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*

Two localities: two mixed pairs, one of which bred.

England, SE

One locality: One mixed pair. KENT One locality: bird paired with Herring Gull *L. argentatus*; did not breed.

England, E

One locality: One mixed pair. SUFFOLK One locality: male hybridised with female Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*, but the clutch of three eggs was lost to predators exactly as in 1999 at the same locality.

No breeding by a full pair this year, though a mixed pair tried and failed, as in 1999.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

Seven localities: 52-56 pairs breeding, fledging a minimum of 38 young.

England, E

One locality: one pair bred unsuccessfully, second pair and single adult displayed, but did not breed.

England, N

Two localities: (1) 34 pairs fledged 33 young; (2) one pair fledged one young.

Wales

Two localities: (1) two pairs bred, both unsuccessful; (2) pair present, but did not breed.

Scotland, Mid

One locality: 10-11 pairs laid in 11 nests, but this may include a pair which re-laid after an earlier failure; four young fledged.

Northern Ireland

One locality: four pairs bred, but no young fledged.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	15	13	15	18	14	15	11	14	11	8	7
Confirmed (pairs)	93	52	62	84	74	72	66	54	50	61	52
Possible/ probable (pairs)	31	5	10	21	24	13	9	1	7	3	4
Max. total pairs	124	57	72	105	98	85	75	55	57	64	56

After last year's better figures, numbers have fallen back and, apart from the largest colony, productivity was poor.

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*

The following summary information has been received. For each area, it is based on a sample rather than a complete census.

Area	Pairs in 1997	Pairs in 1998	Pairs in 1999	Pairs in 2000
England, SW	260	218	235	155
England, SE	182	152	103	199
England, E	561	612	776	691
England, NE	101	146	151	100
England, NW	9	42	50	45
Wales	80	45	86	nc
Scotland	185	215	253	301
TOTALS	1,381	1,460	1,654	1,497

While coverage is not necessarily the same from year to year, the comparisons with the last three years are presented above. The latest estimate of the total British population was 2,430 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

1,625-1,642 pairs.

England, SW

211 pairs. AVON 6. DEVON 42. DORSET 4. GLOUCESTERSHIRE 16. HAMPSHIRE 60. ISLE OF WIGHT 45. SOMERSET 37. WILTSHIRE 1.

England, SE

217+ pairs. BERKSHIRE 2. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE 19. ESSEX 60+. HERTFORDSHIRE 5. KENT 24. OXFORDSHIRE 38. SURREY 4. SUSSEX 65.

England, E

207-214 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE 13. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH 13. LINCOLNSHIRE 64. NORFOLK 34. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE 42-49. SUFFOLK 41.

England, Central

107 pairs. DERBYSHIRE 27. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE 27. SHROPSHIRE 11. STAFFORDSHIRE 2. WARWICKSHIRE 30. WEST MIDLANDS 2. WORCESTERSHIRE 8.

England, N

373 pairs. CHESHIRE 7. CLEVELAND 1. CUMBRIA 61. GREATER MANCHESTER 4. LANCASHIRE 130. NORTHUMBERLAND 15. YORKSHIRE 155.

Wales

109-119 pairs. ANGLESEY 3. BRECON 10-20. CAERNARFON 4. CARMARTHEN 11. CEREDIGION 14. GLAMORGAN 3. GWENT 5. MONTGOMERY 47. MERIONETH 5. PEMBROKE 7.

Scotland, S

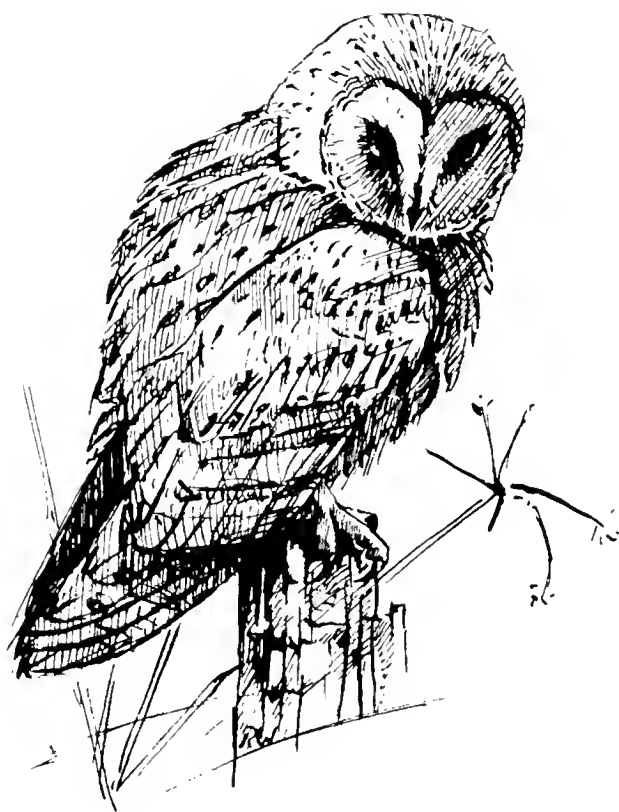
276 pairs. AYRSHIRE 14. BORDERS 51. CLYDE 24. DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY 184. LOTHIANS 3.

Scotland, Mid

19 pairs. ANGUS & DUNDEE 2. FIFE 1. FORTH 3. MORAY & NAIRN 9. NORTHEAST SCOTLAND 2. PERTH & KINROSS 2.

Scotland, N & W

116 pairs. ARGYLL 111. HIGHLAND 5.



Barn Owl *Tyto alba*.

Rosemary Watts/Powell

The total of between 1,625 and 1,642 pairs is slightly more than in 1999. Coverage was good in many counties, but several County Recorders emphasised that their information was incomplete, and in such cases estimates based on past surveys were used. There is also some variation in how sightings of single birds are reported.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

914-946 pairs.

England, SW

102-104 pairs. AVON 10-12. CORNWALL 1. DEVON 4+. DORSET 1. GLOUCESTERSHIRE 14. HAMPSHIRE 29. ISLE OF WIGHT 1. SOMERSET 42.

England, SE

138-149 pairs. BERKSHIRE 3. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE 4. ESSEX 27. GREATER LONDON 5. HERTFORDSHIRE 2. KENT 33. SURREY 30. SUSSEX 34-45.

England, E

117 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE 12. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH 18. LINCOLNSHIRE 1. NORFOLK 13. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE 39. SUFFOLK 34.

England, Central

118-137 pairs. DERBYSHIRE 9. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE 21. SHROPSHIRE 20. STAFFORDSHIRE 5. WARWICKSHIRE 31-50. WEST MIDLANDS 14. WORCESTERSHIRE 18.

England, N

343 pairs. CHESHIRE 30. CLEVELAND 3. CUMBRIA 70. GREATER MANCHESTER 37. LANCASHIRE 100. NORTHUMBERLAND 23. YORKSHIRE 80.

Wales

23 pairs. BRECON 4. CAERNARFON 1. CARMARTHEN 4. CEREDIGION 1. GLAMORGAN 5. GWENT 4. MERIONETH 3. PEMBROKE 1.

Scotland, S

40 pairs. AYRSHIRE 5. BORDERS 22. CLYDE 10. DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY 2. LOTHIANS 1.

Scotland, Mid

25 pairs. ANGUS & DUNDEE 2. FIFE 4. FORTH 8. MORAY & NAIRN 2. NORTHEAST 4. PERTH & KINROSS 5.

Scotland, N & W

8 pairs. HIGHLAND 8.

The reports show between 914 and 946 pairs, rather more than in 1999, but still below the total reached in 1998. Although many of the totals are estimates, Atlas surveys in some counties have been very helpful in producing a more realistic figure.

Wryneck Jynx torquilla

One locality: singing male.

England, N

One locality: male singing for two days in May.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	6	6	1	6	1	3	4	5	2	2	1
Confirmed (pairs)	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Possible/ probable (pairs)	6	5	2	5	1	3	4	4	2	1	1
Max. total pairs	6	6	2	6	1	3	4	5	2	2	1

The lowest total since 1994, and hopes of a recovery now seem misplaced. No reports were received from Scotland, which is disappointing following last year's breeding record.

Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*

Information was received from 19 counties (see table on p. 573) and is compared with data from the previous three years, which include the full census in 1997.

Complete or partial surveys were carried out in Hampshire, Surrey, Norfolk, Suffolk and Sussex. The totals for the first three include some estimates by the County Recorders. It is clear that the population has continued its steady increase.

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*

One locality: single bird.

Scotland, N & W

HIGHLAND One locality: female present in suitable breeding habitat not far from 1977 nest site.

This is the second year running that a bird has been present at this locality.

Wood Lark County	Pairs in 1997	Pairs in 1998	Pairs in 1999	Pairs in 2000
Cornwall	0	0	0	0
Devon	53	7	12	10
Dorset	105	54	66	2
Hampshire	294	174	179	c.325
Somerset	0	0	0	0
Wiltshire	3	2	9	0
Bedfordshire	1	1	0	0
Berkshire	63	2	40	nc
Buckinghamshire	6	3	5	0
Essex	0	3	2	0
Kent	3	6	1	3
Surrey	171	134	135	c.162
Sussex	71	60	nc	78
Lincolnshire	37	40	51	nc
Norfolk	248	326	364	c.300
Suffolk	457	459	474	470
Nottinghamshire	31	78	135	57
Staffordshire	7	3	0	0
Yorkshire	2	19	27	22
TOTALS	1,552	1,371	1,500	1,429

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

'White Wagtail' *M. a. alba*

Five localities: three bred, plus pair, plus hybrid pair.

Scotland, N & W

ARGYLL Two localities: (1) adult feeding young, mate not seen; (2) adult associating with Pied Wagtail *M. a. yarrellii*. WESTERN ISLES Three localities: (1) adult with four juveniles, mate not seen, 14th June; (2) adult collecting food, 23rd June; (3) displaying pair, 2nd-11th June.

Although the possibility of mixed pairings with Pied Wagtail was not excluded in any of the above reports, this is the most records received in any one year.

Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*

One locality: a pair.

Scotland, N & W

HIGHLAND One locality: two birds in suitable breeding habitat, 2nd May, and one in same area, 5th June.

This is the second year running that this species has appeared in these reports. This record is a most intriguing one; the additional June sighting suggests that this might have been more than just a late pair passing through.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

39 localities: 24-66 pairs breeding.

England, SW

Five localities: 1-5 pairs. HAMPSHIRE Five localities: (1) pair bred, success unknown (2)-(5) singles in April-May.

England, SE

23 localities or areas: 18-39 pairs. ESSEX Nine localities: (1)-(9) total of 4 pairs bred, plus 10-11 possible pairs. HERTFORDSHIRE One locality: pair bred. LONDON One area: pair bred, plus three singing males. KENT 11 localities: (1) three pairs bred, fourth pair present; (2) three pairs bred; (3)(4) two pairs bred; (5)(6) single pairs bred; (7)(8) single pairs probably bred; (9)-(11) single pairs present. SURREY One locality: singing male.

England, E

Four localities: 1-11 pairs. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH One locality: three singing males. SUFFOLK Three localities: (1) pair bred, plus two singing males; (2) four singing males; (3) singing male.

England, Central

Four localities or areas: 2-7 pairs. DERBYSHIRE Two localities: (1) singing male; (2) single in May. STAFFORDSHIRE One locality: pair bred. WEST MIDLANDS One area: pair bred, plus another pair and two singing males.

England, N

Three localities: 2-4 pairs. GREATER MANCHESTER One locality: pair probably bred. LANCASHIRE One locality: pair bred. YORKSHIRE One locality: pair bred, plus singing male.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	50	36	44	53	66	58	46	67	71	39	39
Confirmed (pairs)	28	23	14	32	32	19	28	33	32	15	24
Possible/ probable (pairs)	46	46	57	44	63	63	37	66	59	35	42
Max. total pairs	74	69	71	76	95	82	65	99	91	50	66

A better year, thanks to more survey work in Kent, though the important City of London area was not covered.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

Two localities: two singing males.

Scotland, S

One locality: singing male in May.

Scotland, N & W

One locality: territory-holding male, 5th-12th June.

Casual records of singing males occur from time to time. The last confirmed breeding record was in 1995. There was also a singing male in southeast England in June 1999, which was not included in last year's report. This bird was trapped and found to have been ringed as a juvenile at the same locality in August 1997, raising the possibility that breeding may have occurred nearby in that year, and that this individual had returned to its natal area two summers later.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Ten localities: 2-10 pairs breeding.

England, SE

Two localities: (1) pair bred, fledging one young; (2) single in early May and early June.

England, E

One locality: one with Mistle Thrushes *T. viscivorus*, 28th June.

England, Central

One locality: singing male on 25th May.

England, N

Two localities: (1) pair bred, fledging four young; (2) single in suitable habitat, mid May.

Scotland, S

Two localities: (1)(2) pairs in suitable habitat in late May, but no evidence of breeding.

Scotland, Mid

Two localities: (1)(2) pairs in suitable habitat in early May, but no evidence of breeding.

A remarkable resurgence, including two confirmed breeding records, to follow the completely blank year in 1999, which was the first such year since the Panel began collecting records in 1973.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	12	13	7	5	5	6	6	2	4	0	10
Confirmed (pairs)	5	2	2	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Possible/ probable (pairs)	7	11	8	3	5	5	5	2	4	0	8
Max. total pairs	12	13	10	5	5	6	6	2	4	0	10

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Six localities: 4-9 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid

One locality: pair bred.

Scotland, N & W

Five localities: (1) two pairs bred, plus one other pair; (2) pair bred, plus unmated male nearby; (3) pair probably bred; (4)(5) summering individuals.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	17	15	13	22	15	9	28	7	15	20	6
Confirmed (pairs)	6	7	9	5	4	3	3	3	0	2	4
Possible/ probable (pairs)	15	13	15	22	15	11	35	14	18	27	5
Max. total pairs	21	20	24	27	19	14	38	17	18	29	9

An extremely poor year. We urge observers to note when they see or hear this species during the breeding season and to submit the records.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

678 'pairs' or singing males.

England, SW

391 pairs or singing males. AVON 13 singing males. CORNWALL 12 singing males. DEVON 53+ singing males. DORSET 40 singing males. GLOUCESTERSHIRE Three pairs and one singing male. HAMPSHIRE 170 singing males. ISLE OF WIGHT Nine singing males. SOMERSET 90 singing males.

England, SE

53 singing males. ESSEX Five singing males. KENT 33 singing males. SUSSEX 15 singing males.

England, E

171 pairs or singing males. NORFOLK 3 pairs and 140 singing males. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Two singing males. SUFFOLK 26 singing males.

England, Central

Seven singing males. WARWICKSHIRE Three singing males. WORCESTERSHIRE Four singing males.

Wales

56 singing males. ANGLESEY Six singing males. BRECON One singing male. CARMARTHEN 19 singing males. CEREDIGION & PEMBROKE Three singing males. GLAMORGAN 20+ singing males. GWENT Seven singing males.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. counties	21	17	18	21	23	25	28	24	27	24	23
Confirmed ('pairs')	19	27	15	11	14	15	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
Possible/ probable ('pairs')	326	214	283	306	318	426	574	361	496	563	678
Max. total 'pairs'	345	241	298	317	332	441	574	361	496	563	678

A new record total even though there were some gaps in reporting, e.g. in southeast England.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

Two localities: 1-2 pairs breeding.

England, SE

One locality: one pair. SUSSEX One locality: pair bred, fledging two broods of four.

England, N

One locality: 0-1 pair. LANCASHIRE One locality: singing male.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	5	13	13	5	7	2	3	4	2	7	2
Confirmed (pairs)	1	0	2	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Possible/ probable (pairs)	9	16	20	4	9	3	3	5	2	9	1
Max. total pairs	10	16	22	8	10	3	3	5	2	9	2

The optimism engendered by the improved showing in 1999 was sadly misplaced, as shown by another desperately poor year. It seems that the demise of Savi's Warbler as a British breeding bird is imminent, although the reasons why this should be so are unclear.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

One locality: one singing male.

Scotland, N & W

HIGHLAND One locality: singing male on 7th-22nd June in suitable habitat at Nigg Bay (*Brit. Birds* 94: 489).

For the second year running this species has appeared in this report, although the bird in 1999 was only singing on one day.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

21 localities: 0-31 pairs breeding.

England, SE

11 localities: six pairs and 15 singing males or individuals. ESSEX One locality: singing male. KENT Nine localities: (1) three pairs and two singing males; (2) three pairs; (3)(4) three singing males; (5)-(9) single birds or singing males. SUSSEX One locality: singing male.

England, E

Seven localities: seven singing males or individuals. NORFOLK One locality: one present. SUFFOLK Five localities: (1)-(5) single singing males. SURREY One locality: singing male.

England, Central

One locality: one singing male. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE One locality: singing male on one date only.

England, N

Two localities: two singing males. NORTHUMBERLAND Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	12	15	13	15	22	16	11	17	10	22	21
Confirmed (pairs)	13	9	9	12	0	2	3	5	9	3	0
Possible/ probable (pairs)	11	23	26	46	48	29	19	27	15	26	31
Max. total pairs	24	32	35	58	48	31	22	32	24	29	31

A second good year, helped by a thorough survey by the Kent Ornithological Society. This was, however, balanced by a reduction in the number of records from northern England.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

One locality: one singing male.

England, Central

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE One locality: singing male at Earl's Barton, 10th-28th June (*Brit. Birds* 94: 489).

Almost every year, at least one singing male turns up somewhere, but all have failed to attract a mate.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*

One locality: one singing male.

Scotland, N & W

SHETLAND One locality: singing male, 20th-22nd May.

This species has bred in Britain on a handful of occasions.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*

One locality: one singing male.

England, SE

One locality: singing male on 29th May in suitable habitat.

A bird singing in suitable habitat meets the Panel's criteria.

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

Up to 1,925 territories identified.

England, SW

County totals: DEVON 196, DORSET 107 (incomplete), HAMPSHIRE 800+ (largely estimated), ISLE OF WIGHT 7, SOMERSET 80.

England, SE

County totals: SURREY 595, SUSSEX 106 (both including some estimation).

England, E

County totals: NORFOLK 1, SUFFOLK 33.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. counties	8	8	7	11	10	12	12	11	12	11	9
Confirmed (pairs)	55	67	63	93	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
Possible/ probable (pairs)	873	634	863	1,053	1,675	1,679	552	915	947	1,747	1,925
Max. total pairs	928	701	926	1,146	1,675	1,679	552	915	947	1,747	1,925

The above county totals include population estimates to a varying degree, especially in Hampshire where the substantial population in the New Forest was not surveyed this year. It is of interest that although the population continues to grow and to spread in some counties, Devon reported a 21% decline compared with the 1999 total, itself 10% down on the previous year.

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus*

One locality: one singing male.

England, SW

CORNWALL One locality: singing male near Bodmin, 13th to at least 31st May (*Brit. Birds* 94: 494).

This is the second year running that this species has appeared in these reports.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

33 localities or areas: 2-103 pairs breeding.

England, SW

Six localities or areas: 1-53 pairs. GLOUCESTERSHIRE Two localities: (1) pair bred; (2) singing male. HAMPSHIRE Three localities or areas: (1) 37 pairs at 16 sites; (2) 12 pairs at five sites; (3) singing male. SOMERSET One locality: singing male.

England, SE

12 localities: 1-29 pairs. ESSEX Three localities: (1)-(3) total of five singing males. KENT Two localities: (1) two singing males; (2) singing male. SURREY Four localities: (1) pair bred; (2) three singing males; (3)(4) single singing males. SUSSEX Three localities or areas: (1) up to ten singing males; (2) up to four singing males; (3) singing male.

England, E

11 localities: 0-17 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: singing male. NORFOLK Eight localities: (1) pair, plus four singing males; (2) two singing males; (3)-(8) single singing males. SUFFOLK Two localities: (1) two singing males; (2) pair.

England, Central

One locality: 0-1 pairs. WARWICKSHIRE One locality: singing male on 10th May only.

Wales

Two localities: 0-2 pairs. GWENT One locality: singing male in May. MERIONETH One locality: singing male in May.

Scotland, Mid

One locality: 0-1 pairs. NORTHEAST One locality: singing male, 24th-27th April.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	48	19	15	20	41	35	35	26	30	37	33
Confirmed (pairs)	9	2	3	3	4	4	4	2	0	3	2
Possible/ probable (pairs)	88	20	16	25	62	52	56	46	62	100	101
Max. total pairs	97	22	19	28	66	56	60	48	62	103	103

Another good year, comparable with 1999. As with all secretive species, the numbers included within these totals depends on particular areas being surveyed, with Hampshire and Sussex being well covered again this year. Detailed survey work is especially rewarding for this attractive species.

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

The following information has been received, comprising 483-520 pairs.

England, SW

DORSET 12 pairs at two localities. HAMPSHIRE 16-18 pairs. SOMERSET 6 pairs.

England, SE

ESSEX 6-10 pairs at two localities, third not counted. KENT 57 pairs. SUSSEX 17-18 pairs at three localities.

England, E

NORFOLK County total of 80-100. SUFFOLK County total of 140 pairs at seven localities.

England, N

LANCASHIRE 65 pairs at one locality. NORTHUMBERLAND Pair bred at same locality as last year. YORKSHIRE 55 pairs at one locality.

Wales

GLAMORGAN One pair.

Scotland, Mid

MORAY & NAIRN Up to two males and two females at same locality as in the last two years, but no evidence of breeding. PERTH & KINROSS One extensive locality containing a population estimated, from capture-recapture data, at c.190 birds, or, in the region of 25-35 pairs. The first breeding at this locality took place in 1991, but the size of the reedbeds has made accurate assessment of breeding numbers difficult.

This is the highest total recorded since the Panel took on this species in 1996, and well above the 339-408 pairs estimated in 1992 by Campbell *et al.* (1996). With a large increase in the numbers breeding in Kent and a substantial population now breeding in Scotland, a strong case can be justified for a full survey of this species.

Crested Tit *Parus cristatus*

Scotland, Mid

MORAY & NAIRN Estimated county total 50-100 pairs; 12 pairs in nestboxes in one study area fledged 63 young; 13 pairs (11 in boxes) in second area fledged c.20 young.

Scotland, N & W

HIGHLAND Five areas or localities: (1)-(5) total of 14 pairs, of which four fledged 21 young.

These data, which present a very incomplete picture of the Scottish population, were received from local studies. The estimated total population is 900 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

20 localities: 5-20 pairs breeding.

England, SW

Two localities: (1) male in song, 19th-25th May; (2) male in song, 12th June; both were possibly migrants.

England, SE

Four localities: (1)-(3) singing males, no sign of any females; (4) female, 19th June, no evidence of breeding.

England, E

13 localities or areas: 43 sites visited in study area, with presence of birds confirmed at ten. Only five pairs were confirmed as breeding, three of which probably produced fledged young (but no count of young was possible), while the other two nests were predated. Pairs were present at three other sites where breeding probably occurred, and two other sites held males only. Away from the study area, a pair probably bred (success unknown), a singing male was present at a second locality, and a female was seen on 17th May at a third.

England, Central

One locality: singing male on 25th June.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	38	27	37	33	34	34	22	23	19	24	20
Confirmed (pairs)	10	16	14	14	7	8	7	9	10	5	5
Possible/ probable (pairs)	32	12	23	19	28	27	15	15	12	19	15
Max. total pairs	42	28	37	33	35	35	22	24	22	24	20

2000 was even worse than 1999, with bad weather at critical times affecting rearing and fledging success and, quite probably, increasing the predation risk. The Panel is most grateful for the detailed information on the eastern England population supplied by the Golden Oriole Group.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Four localities: 0-4 pairs breeding.

England, SW

Two localities: (1) male in early June; (2) female on 15th June. Although probable migrants, the female at least was close to a former breeding area.

England, E

Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males, possibly the same bird.

Another poor year, with no reports from northern Scotland where there have been a handful of recent breeding records.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	7	5	13	6	7	1	3	6	9	5	4
Confirmed (pairs)	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Possible/ probable (pairs)	7	4	12	6	7	1	3	5	9	4	4
Max. total pairs	8	5	13	6	8	1	3	6	9	5	4

Red-billed Cough *Pyrhacorax pyrrhacorax*

Area	Occupied sites	Successful pairs	Young reared	Young/territorial pair
Wales				
Anglesey	34	11	25	0.7
Caernarfon	14	13	46	3.3
Ceredigion	23	14	20	0.9
Glamorgan	2	1	4	2.0
Pembroke	59	Not reported	92	1.6
Scotland				
Dumfries & Galloway	1	1	0	0.0
Colonsay & Oronsay	12	8	Not known	—
Mull	1	0	0	0.0
TOTALS	146	51+	187	1.3

Several areas, including Islay and the Isle of Man, were not surveyed this year.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

One locality: one singing male.

Scotland, N & W

HIGHLAND One locality: singing male.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	1	2	2	2	4	8	0	1	0	5	1
Confirmed (pairs)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Possible/ probable (pairs)	1	2	3	1	4	8	0	1	0	5	1
Max. total pairs	1	2	3	2	4	8	0	1	0	5	1

European Serin *Serinus serinus*

One locality: two individuals.

England, SE

One locality: one, unsexed, on 16th May and a male on 28th June. Although probable migrants, these are worth recording.

Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

The following information was received for England and Wales. The few Scottish records submitted are not presented.

England, SW

DEVON Three pairs bred at one locality. GLOUCESTERSHIRE Pair bred, plus several singing males. HAMPSHIRE At least 12 pairs. ISLE OF WIGHT Pair bred (first breeding record), plus three other pairs. SOMERSET Six birds in suitable habitat.

England, SE

KENT Nine pairs. SURREY 18 pairs. SUSSEX 41-45 pairs.

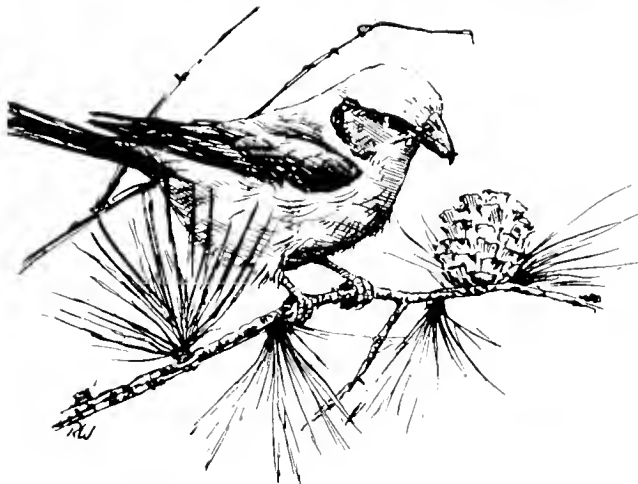
England, E

NORFOLK Family parties at five localities. SUFFOLK Six pairs bred, plus 12 pairs, at ten localities.

England, Central

DERBYSHIRE Pair bred. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE 11 pairs bred, plus one non-breeding pair, at five localities.

SHROPSHIRE Up to ten pairs.
 STAFFORDSHIRE Pair bred.
 England, N
 CUMBRIA 10-15 pairs.
 GREATER MANCHESTER Pair bred.
 YORKSHIRE Ten pairs present in county.
 Wales
 BRECON Two pairs.



Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*.

Rosemary Watts/Powell

A better year than 1999, with many more reports of wintering birds staying on into the spring. The species remains very difficult to survey.

Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica*

Scotland, N & W
 Two localities: seven pairs.

No reports were received from the two main study areas so this information is much less complete than we would have liked. See Summers *et al.* (2002) for more information on the distribution and habitats of this species.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*

Several localities: population size unknown.

Scotland, Mid and N & W

HIGHLAND Present and breeding at the RSPB's reserve at Abernethy, where four pairs fledged three young in 2000. Probable breeding was reported in Curr Wood, Glenmore Forest and Rothiemurchus (Inverness-shire), Culbin Forest (Morayshire) and Glen Tanar, Ballochbuie and Mar Lodge (Aberdeenshire).

The distribution, status and breeding biology of this species were discussed recently (Summers 2002; Summers *et al.* 2002), but neither paper gave any estimate of population size.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Four localities: two pairs and four singing males.

England, E

NORFOLK One locality: immature male singing on 18th June.

England, N

YORKSHIRE One locality: two pairs, both seen nest-building, and third singing male, but no evidence of egg-laying.

Scotland, S

BORDERS Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males in early June.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. localities	3	1	13	6	6	5	6	8	7	5	4
Confirmed (pairs)	1	0	5	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Possible/ probable (pairs)	2	2	15	7	8	7	10	7	7	5	6
Max. total pairs	3	2	20	7	8	7	10	8	7	5	6

The first indications of breeding for two years, even if nothing came of it.

Mike Langman



Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*.

Snow Bunting
Plectrophenax nivalis

Five areas or localities: up to six pairs.

Scotland, Mid and N & W

NORTHEAST SCOTLAND/HIGHLAND Four areas or localities: up to four pairs or singing males. WESTERN ISLES One locality: one or two pairs between late April and early July.

The above casual records are not representative of this species, which has an estimated population of 70-100 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

None was reported from Cornwall, and no survey was undertaken in Devon this year. The next full census will take place in 2002.

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The generic status of Black-browed Albatross and other albatrosses

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and David T. Parkin

Since the publication of Alexander *et al.* (1965), two genera of albatrosses have been universally recognised. The two sooty albatrosses (*Phoebetria*) are traditionally separated from the remaining albatrosses (*Diomedea*) based on the following characters: completely dusky plumage coloration; a longer, wedge-shaped tail giving a distinctly cigar-shaped body; and the presence of a coloured fleshy sulcus separating the rami-corns (horny plates running along the lower mandible, a character also found in other Procellariiformes) (see references in Nunn *et al.* 1996).

Based on the comparative morphology of wing, tail and bill, Warham (1990) divided the 14 species of albatrosses into four groups: the North Pacific albatrosses, the great albatrosses, the mollymawks, and the sooty albatrosses. These same groups had been recognised previously by Coues (1866), based on the presence or absence of well-described morphological features, although he recognised only two genera, *Phoebetria* and *Diomedea* (as above).

Phylogenetic relationships

A recent molecular study of the phylogenetic relationships of all 14 albatross species (Nunn *et al.* 1996) has confirmed the existence of the four groups defined by Coues (1866) and Warham (1990). Nunn *et al.* (1996) sequenced 1,143 base pairs of the mitochondrial cytochrome *b* gene, of which 333 were variable, and performed two statistical analyses. The first of these, called Maximum Parsimony (MP),

compares the order of bases in all of the DNA sequences simultaneously, and determines the minimum number of substitutions necessary to accommodate all of these into a single phylogenetic tree. The second is called Maximum Likelihood (ML) and examines all possible phylogenetic relationships (trees) among the taxa under investigation. The likelihood of every tree is determined from the number of base substitutions in the total array of sequences needed to generate each tree. ML then identifies the preferred tree as the one which is most likely, given the DNA sequences. Identical branching topologies were supported in both MP and ML analyses (fig. 1). This tree maintained its integrity when further outgroup species (i.e. those which are more distantly related) were included; this is an important test for the robustness of a topology. The statistical support for the relationship was estimated by a technique called 'bootstrapping'. This examines each 'node' or fork in the tree and determines the probability that it is real – i.e. that the two taxa can be separated at this point. A high value indicates that there is strong support for the relationship. The four groups identified by Nunn *et al.* (1996), and shown in fig. 1, are supported by high bootstrap values (99-100%), giving us confidence in the relationships.

Interestingly, the results indicate that the sooty albatrosses (*Phoebetria*) are the sister-group to the mollymawks, rather than to all remaining albatrosses. Thus, it seems that the genus *Diomedea*, as traditionally defined, is not

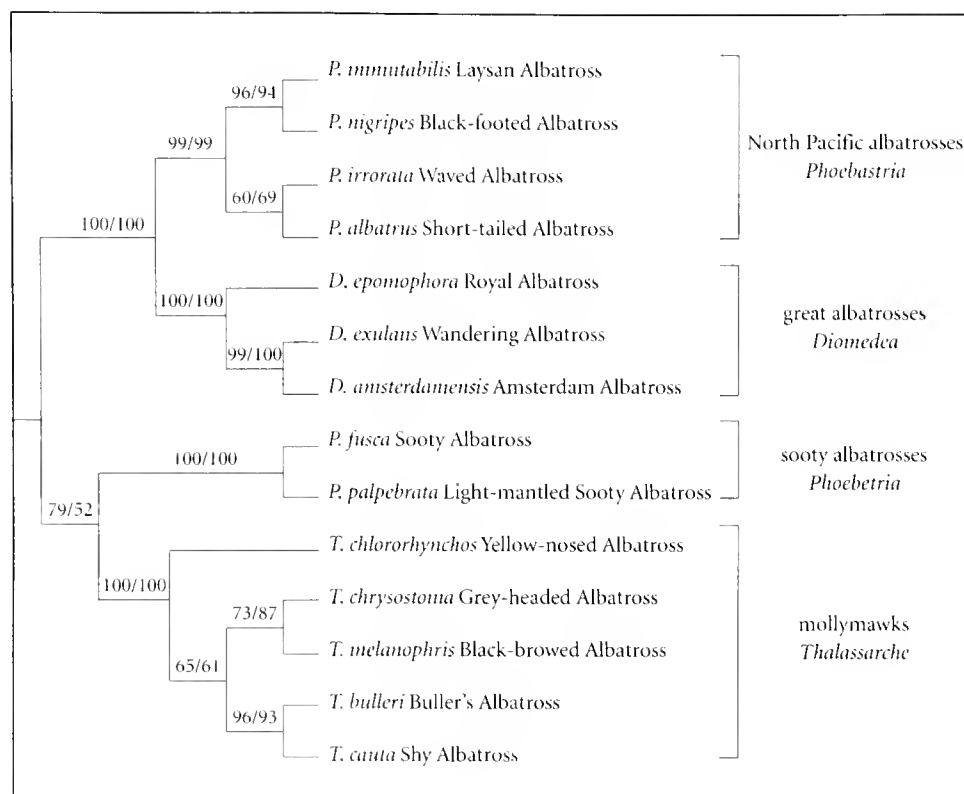


Fig. 1. Phylogenetic relationships among albatrosses based on MP and ML analyses of cytochrome *b* sequences (Nunn *et al.* 1996). Numbers denote the percentage bootstrap support (MP/ML), an indication of the strength of the evidence that the particular relationship exists. High values indicate strong support.

descended from a single common ancestor (i.e. it is not 'monophyletic'), but comprises two groups (see fig. 1). One of these includes the great and North Pacific albatrosses, and the other comprises the mollymawks. Since the mollymawks are genetically closer to the sooty albatrosses, they cannot be merged with the other group; they must either be kept separate, or the whole albatross complex must be merged into a single taxonomic unit.

Further assessment of the relationships among the four groups allowed a series of different hypothetical trees to be compared, and the one(s) that best fit the data to be identified (see Nunn *et al.* 1996 for details). This confirmed that the sister-group relationship of sooty albatrosses and mollymawks was the best of several alternatives. The root of this best-supported topology was subsequently determined to lie between North Pacific and great albatrosses on the one hand, and sooty albatrosses and mollymawks on the other (as in fig. 1). This suggests that the ancestral albatrosses split first into two groups, leading to the mollymawks and sooty albatrosses in one group and the great and North Pacific albatrosses in the other.

The study thus revealed strong evidence of

four higher-level species groups, which is congruent with previous groupings based on other characters and methods. The traditional taxonomic arrangement (of just two genera) is not, however, supported.

Two subsequent studies support these conclusions. Nunn & Stanley (1998) performed a similar molecular investigation but included a much larger number of species. In this study, cytochrome *b* sequences were obtained from 22 albatross taxa, 63 other tube-nosed

seabirds (Procellariiformes) and five penguins (Spheniscidae). The study identified the same four major groups of albatrosses, and the same phylogenetic relationships between them, as Nunn *et al.* (1996). Because the same characters (cytochrome *b* sequences) were used, Nunn & Stanley's results cannot be regarded as independent confirmation of the relationships suggested by Nunn *et al.*, but they do show that the latter's findings are robust to the inclusion of additional ingroup (albatrosses) and outgroup (other tube-nosed seabirds) taxa.

Kennedy & Page (2002) combined seven seabird phylogenies (based on behavioural, DNA-DNA hybridisation, isozyme, life-history, morphological and DNA-sequence data) into a single 'supertree'. One of the source trees was that of Nunn & Stanley (1998); the others were taken from the publications of Imber (1985), Sibley & Ahlquist (1990), Paterson *et al.* (1995), Austin (1996), Bretagnolle *et al.* (1998) and Heidrich *et al.* (1998). The supertree included 122 taxa and represents a conservative estimate of the relationships among tube-nosed seabirds presented in the original seven phylogenies. This supertree revealed the four major groups of albatrosses, and also indicated a sister-group relationship between the sooty albatrosses and

the mollymawks, and a sister relationship between North Pacific and great albatrosses. Again, this should not be viewed as an independent corroboration of the findings of Nunn *et al.* (1996). Rather, it shows that the relationships revealed by Nunn & Stanley (1998) are retained if their results are analysed in combination with those obtained by six other studies.

Taxonomy

Nunn *et al.* (1996) suggested a revised classification in which the four groups are recognised as separate genera (fig. 1), and this is now gaining widespread acceptance. It was adopted at the international albatross convention in Hobart, Tasmania, in 1995 (Alexander *et al.* 1997), by the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU 1997, 1998), by specialist and conservation groups (Robertson & Gales 1998; BirdLife International 2000) and in general reviews and reference works (Clements 2000; Brooke 2002, in press).

Conclusion

Based on these considerations, the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (BOURC in press) has adopted the generic classification proposed by Nunn *et al.* (1996). For the British List this means that Black-browed Albatross is placed in the genus *Thalassarche* and thus becomes *Thalassarche melanophris*. Of the other species recorded in the Western Palearctic, Yellow-nosed and Shy Albatrosses are also placed in *Thalassarche* and become *Thalassarche chlororhynchos* and *Thalassarche cauta* respectively, while Wandering Albatross remains as *Diomedea exulans*.

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Homes for birds: the use of houses for nesting by birds in the UK

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Rosemary Watts/Powell

ABSTRACT A joint survey, by RSPB and the BBC Radio 4 'Today' programme, investigated the use of houses for nesting by four bird species (Common Swift *Apus apus*, House Martin *Delichon urbica*, Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* and House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*). Almost 10,000 completed questionnaires were received, representing a wide range of house types in rural, suburban and urban locations, with most responses from old, rural properties. The survey revealed that houses built before 1919 are most important for nesting birds, with Common Swifts and House Sparrows recorded much more frequently than in modern homes. Houses in rural localities were more likely to hold nesting birds than those in urban areas, this being particularly marked for Common Swifts, House Martins and House Sparrows. Houses in which recent roof repairs had been undertaken were less likely to hold nesting Common Swifts and Common Starlings. The roof space or under the eaves were the most commonly reported nest-site locations. Modern houses, particularly in urban areas, are used relatively infrequently by nesting birds.

Common Swifts *Apus apus* (hereafter referred to as Swifts), House Martins *Delichon urbica*, Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* (hereafter referred to as Starlings) and House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* all nest regularly on or in buildings in the UK. Almost the entire UK population of Swifts nests in buildings, as do most of the House Martins, although a few cliff-nesting colonies still remain (Gibbons *et al.* 1993). The *Homes for Birds* survey was launched by the RSPB and the BBC Radio 4 'Today' programme in August 2000 to investigate the use of houses for nesting by these four bird species.

Starling and House Sparrow populations in the UK are declining, with trends from Common Birds Census (CBC) plots showing a decrease of 70% and 42% respectively between 1968 and 1998 (Baillie *et al.* 2001). There is evidence that Starlings and, in particular, House Sparrows are in serious decline in urban areas. A study of autumn bird counts in Kensington Gardens, London, between 1925 and 1995, showed a 56% decline in Starling numbers and a 97% decline in House Sparrow numbers (Summers-Smith 1999). Population trends for Swifts are poorly understood in the UK. Swifts were not well monitored before the start of the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) in 1994, which has shown large fluctuations in abundance since then (Baillie *et al.* 2001). Although generally thought to be stable, a 19% increase in the UK House Martin population between 1970 and 1998 has been shown by Gregory *et al.* (2001), based on CBC plots. There are, however, frequent reports of localised declines, probably because of colonies fragmenting and dispersing at a local scale (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

A shortage of available nesting sites may be one of the reasons for such declines, and it may be the case that modern houses provide fewer nesting opportunities, perhaps because of more stringent building regulations. This survey was designed to gather information on features of buildings associated with the presence or absence of nesting birds, and to look for any potential regional variations.

Methods

The survey was devised with the aim of attracting a wide public response throughout the UK; it was not designed to be a stratified sample survey of the UK housing stock. The survey was publicised through a report on the

BBC Radio 4 'Today' programme in August 2000. Listeners were asked to take part in the survey and given a choice of either telephoning for the survey form or completing one on the BBC website.

The questionnaire sought information about the house concerned and about which, if any, of the four species were nesting. Participants were asked which age category their house belonged to: pre-1919; 1919-44; 1945-64; 1965-84; or post-1984. These age categories were based on those used by the former Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR; now the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) in their housing statistics (see www.housing.detr.gov.uk). Information on settlement type (whether the house was in an urban, suburban or rural setting) was also requested.

Participants were asked whether Swifts, House Martins, Starlings or House Sparrows nested in, or on, their home in 2000. If so, there were further questions on nest location. There was space on the survey form to record the use of more than one site by each of the four species. It was made clear that the aim of the survey was not to find out how many of each species were nesting. Respondents were also asked if there had been any roof repairs to the house in the previous ten years.

Statistical analysis

The effects of four factors on the presence or absence of each species were analysed by logistic regression using the GENMOD procedure in SAS (SAS 1997). The four factors were: house age (five categories, as above); settlement type (rural, suburban or urban); country (England, Scotland or Wales); and whether the roof had been repaired in the previous ten years (yes or no). Initially, the models for each species included all these factors and the two-way interactions between them. Non-significant factors were then removed in turn to provide the final model for each species. The remaining factors have a statistically significant effect, controlling for all other factors left in the model.

Results

Sample composition

Almost 10,000 replies were received, with 88% from England, 7% from Wales, 4% from Scotland and less than 1% from Northern Ireland. Because relatively few returns were received

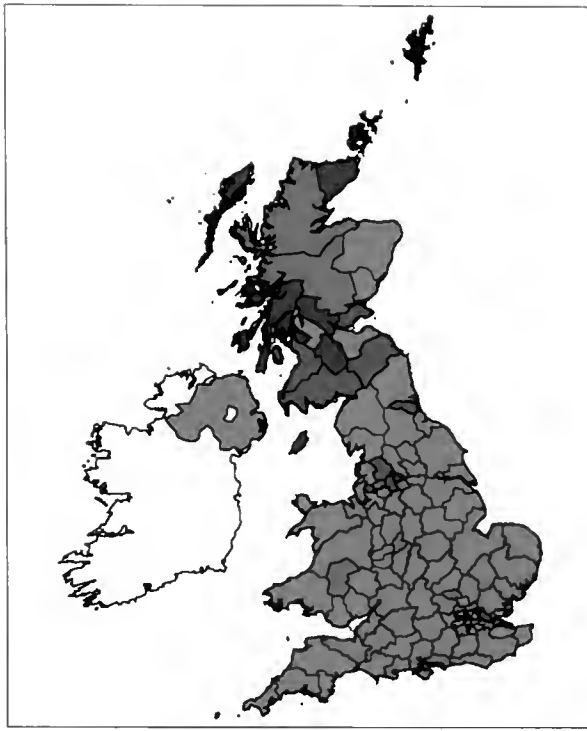


Fig. 1. The number of responses from each postal area of the UK in the *Homes for Birds* survey. The level of response increases from dark green (1-12 responses) through to dark red (129-201 responses).

from Northern Ireland ($n=34$), it was omitted from the regional analyses and from the logistic regression models, although those data were included in analyses of the UK as a whole. The distribution of records throughout the UK is shown in fig. 1.

For England, survey replies were received from a significantly greater proportion of older houses than are present in the national housing stock (table 1). Unfortunately, age-related housing-stock figures were available only for England, so it was not possible to repeat that analysis for the UK as a whole, or for the other constituent countries, although there was an

even larger proportion of returns from older properties in Scotland and Wales. There were relatively few records for houses in the 1919-1944 and 1945-1964 age classes everywhere. The majority of returns, nationally and from all three countries separately, came from rural properties, with fewest returns from urban areas.

Associations between bird species and housing/settlement type

All four species showed a significant preference for older houses, independent of the other factors considered (table 2; fig. 2). Similarly, all four species preferred rural houses to those in suburban and urban areas, again independent of other factors (fig. 3). Nesting Swifts were reported from just 6% of homes in the survey (table 3), but 65% of all records were from rural houses. Over 30% of all rural properties had nesting House Martins, although less than 10% of those in suburban and urban settings did so (table 3).

Geographical location influenced the proportion of homes which were occupied by House Martins (greater in Scotland and Wales than in England) and Starlings (greater in England and Scotland than in Wales). House Sparrows were least frequent in England (36% home occupancy) and most frequent in Wales (41% occupancy), although this difference was not significant. Swifts and Starlings showed a significant preference for houses which had not had any roof repairs in the previous ten years.

The two-way interaction between house age and settlement type was significant for all four species. Table 3 shows the numbers of records of each of the four species, broken down by age and settlement type. For all four species, houses

Table 1. The pattern of age and location of houses in England, Scotland and Wales in the *Homes for Birds* survey. The DETR age-group figures for England are included as a comparison (from the DETR website; see text). For England, there were survey replies from a significantly greater proportion of older houses than are present in the national housing stock ($\chi^2_3=9.6$, $p<0.05$).

	England	DETR figures	Scotland	Wales	UK
Pre-1919	36.2	23.4	51.1	42.6	37.3
1919-1944	16.8	19.2	7.7	11.5	16.0
1945-1964	15.1	20.9	7.0	11.5	14.5
Post-1964	31.8	36.6	34.1	33.4	32.1
Rural	51.4		62.1	67.5	53.0
Suburban	36.2		30.1	25.1	35.2
Urban	12.4		7.8	7.3	11.8

Table 2. Logistic regression models for each of the four study species in the *Homes for Birds* survey which model the importance of a number of factors (house age, settlement type, country, and roof repairs; see text for details) on whether or not each species nests in a given house. Two-way interactions between each of the variables are also shown. The symbols in the probability (p) column show whether a factor has a statistically significant effect (* denotes $p < 0.05$, ** denotes $p < 0.01$ and *** denotes $p < 0.001$) on the presence or absence of nesting birds of each species.

	df	Common Swift <i>Apus apus</i>		House Martin <i>Delichon urbica</i>		Common Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>	
		χ^2	p	χ^2	p	χ^2	p	χ^2	p
house age	4	167.5	***	26.7	***	13.0	**	29.0	***
settlement type	2	15.4	***	283.4	***	32.8	***	135.9	***
country	2			40.5	***	29.9	***		
roof repaired or not	1	11.3	***			9.1	***		
age with settlement type	8	24.1	***	17.8	*	28.3	***	41.3	***
age with repairs	5							14.2	***
settlement type with repairs	3			9.0	**				

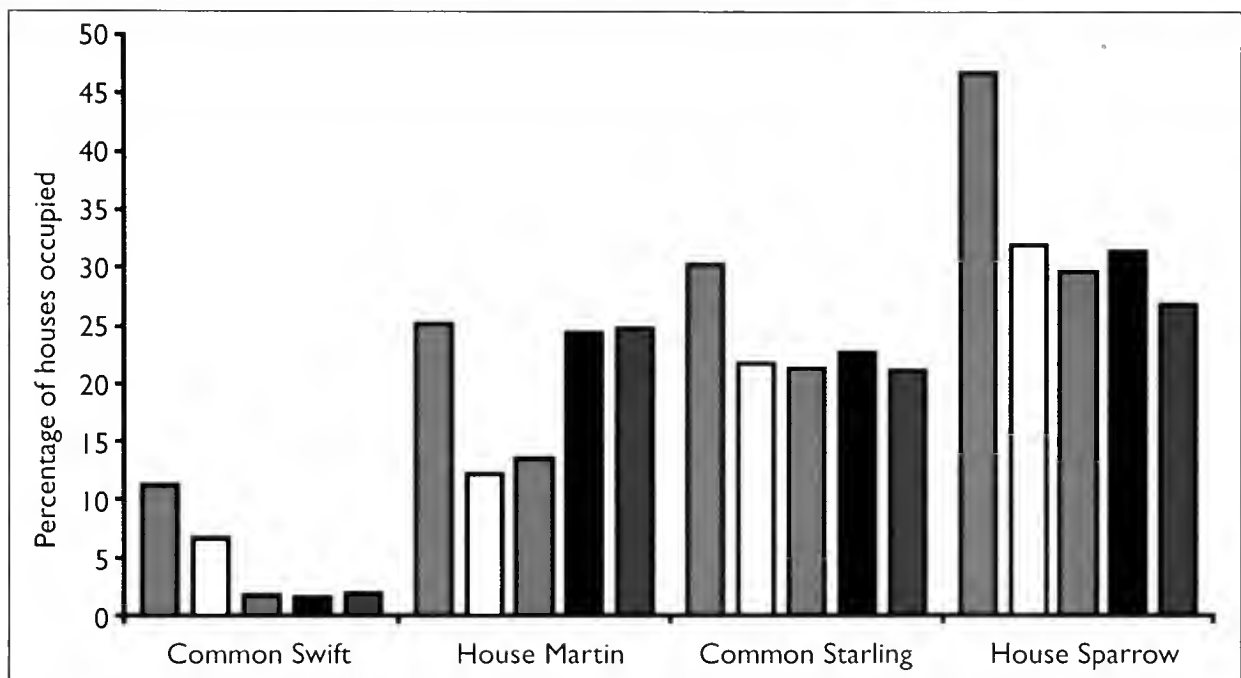


Fig. 2. The proportion of houses occupied by Common Swifts *Apus apus*, House Martins *Delichon urbica*, Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* and House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* in the *Homes for Birds* survey, in relation to house age. House age classes are: pre-1919 (red), 1919-1944 (white), 1945-1964 (blue), 1965-1984 (black) and post-1984 (green).

built before 1919 in rural areas were the most preferred. Swifts always preferred older (pre-1945) housing, although the occupancy pattern with respect to property age varied with settlement type. For House Martins, newer homes (post-1964) were preferred over older ones in suburban settings. Both Starlings and House Sparrows preferred older houses in rural areas, but occupancy rate was more uniform in suburban and urban settlements.

The House Sparrow model showed a signifi-

cant two-way interaction between house age and roof repairs (table 2). This was apparent mainly in housing built between 1945 and 1984, where House Sparrows were statistically much more likely to occur in houses with no roof repairs. The House Martin model showed a significant two-way interaction between settlement type and roof repairs (table 2), although this result seems mainly to reflect that occupancy was always much higher in rural than urban/suburban settlements.

Table 3. The number (and percentage) of houses in the *Homes for Birds* survey which were occupied by Common Swifts *Apus apus*, House Martins *Delichon urbica*, Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* and House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* in rural, suburban and urban locations, broken down by house age class.

	Common Swift No. occupied homes	House Martin No. occupied homes	Common Starling No. occupied homes	House Sparrow No. occupied homes
Pre-1919 rural	234 (12.5%)	633 (33.3%)	657 (35.3%)	1,017 (55.7%)
1919-44 rural	21 (5.7%)	96 (25.7%)	99 (26.9%)	149 (41.2%)
1945-64 rural	14 (3.0%)	114 (24.4%)	106 (23.3%)	156 (34.7%)
1965-84 rural	14 (1.7%)	288 (34.9%)	186 (23.0%)	278 (35.4%)
Post-1984 rural	15 (3.1%)	156 (31.8%)	110 (22.9%)	163 (34.0%)
All rural	298 (7.4%)	1,287 (31.7%)	1,158 (29.2%)	1,763 (45.2%)
Pre-1919 suburban	51 (10.5%)	49 (9.9%)	105 (22.2%)	136 (29.4%)
1919-44 suburban	50 (6.9%)	44 (6.1%)	137 (19.5%)	188 (27.1%)
1945-64 suburban	4 (0.7%)	31 (5.7%)	103 (19.3%)	136 (25.7%)
1965-84 suburban	10 (1.5%)	94 (14.2%)	145 (22.4%)	173 (27.6%)
Post-1984 suburban	1 (0.3%)	53 (17.0%)	63 (20.3%)	54 (18.1%)
All suburban	116 (4.3%)	271 (9.9%)	553 (20.7%)	687 (26.3%)
Pre-1919 urban	32 (7.2%)	38 (8.4%)	76 (17.8%)	119 (27.8%)
1919-44 urban	13 (9.2%)	11 (7.5%)	27 (19.1%)	48 (34.0%)
1945-64 urban	1 (1.0%)	7 (6.7%)	24 (23.5%)	28 (27.5%)
1965-84 urban	0 (0)	10 (8.5%)	22 (19.0%)	27 (24.3%)
Post-1984 urban	1 (1.3%)	11 (14.1%)	9 (12.5%)	11 (14.9%)
All urban	47 (5.3%)	77 (8.6%)	158 (18.4%)	233 (27.2%)
Total	461 (6.1%)	1,635 (21.3%)	1,869 (24.9%)	2,683 (36.4%)

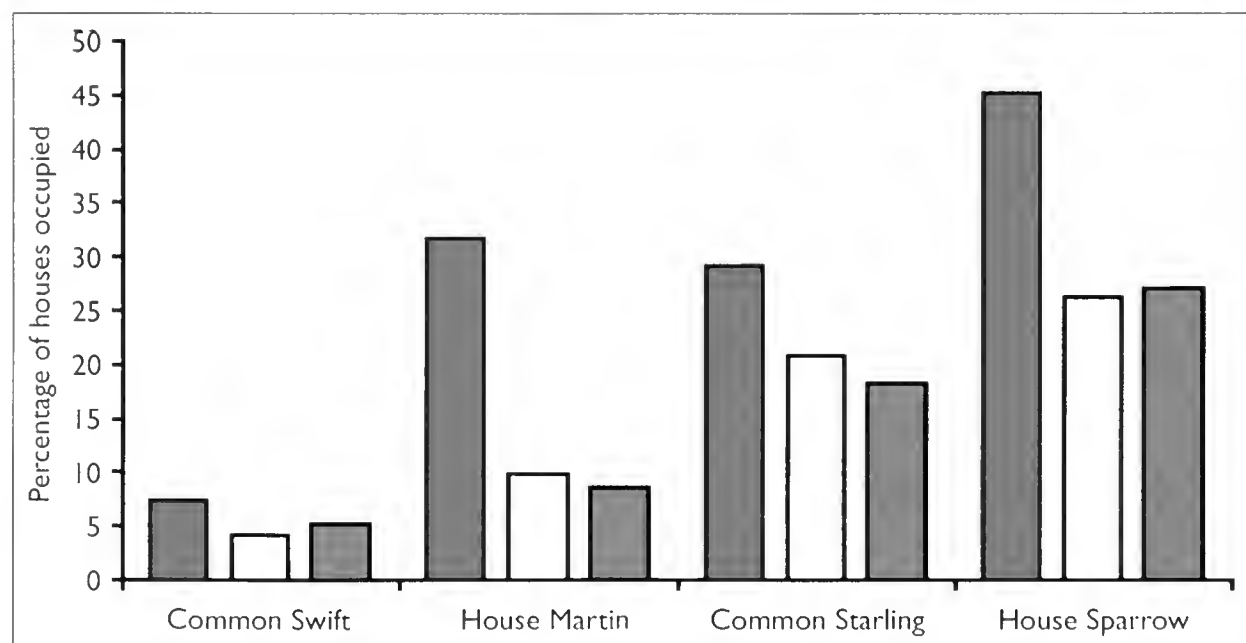


Fig. 3. The proportion of houses in rural (red), suburban (white) and urban (blue) areas occupied by Common Swifts *Apus apus*, House Martins *Delichon urbica*, Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* and House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* in the *Homes for Birds* survey.

The numbers of species recorded

Throughout the UK, 55% of the survey participants had one or more of the four species nesting in or on their homes. Sixty per cent of these had only one species, however, while less

than 1% had all four species nesting. England reported more houses with none of the four species (46%) than either Scotland (39%) or Wales (39%), and smaller percentages of houses with one, two, three and four species.



Tim Loseby

320. Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Kent, April 1990.

Throughout the UK, the proportion of dwellings reported to have one or more nesting species varied with house age. Of the newer properties, 51% of post-1984 housing and 55% of houses built between 1965 and 1984 had one or more of the four species nesting, while 64% of the pre-1919 houses supported nesting birds. Significantly fewer houses built during 1919-44 (48%) and 1945-64 (45%) hosted one or more species. Considering the UK as a whole, a significantly higher proportion of rural houses (67.1%) reported one or more nesting species than those in either suburban (43%) or urban (41%) areas, and this trend was apparent in all three countries.

Nest sites

The majority of Swifts reported in this survey (82%) were nesting in the roof space or in the eaves of houses. There were no regional differences in the nesting sites chosen by Swifts. Over 90% of House Martins were recorded in natural nests, with only 4% using artificial nests. The majority (58%) built their nests against brick or stone, with a further 13% against brick, stone and wood together, and another 12% against wood alone. These three substrates accounted for 83% of all House Martin nests. Only 4% of House Martins built their nests against UPVC. Since data on availability of substrate type

across the UK housing stock were not collected, it is not possible to say if this indicates a preference for brick or stone. No differences were detected in the use of nesting sites between countries.

Most Starlings nested in the roof space (71%), with chimneys and walls the next most frequent sites. The occupancy of more than one site in a single dwelling was less frequent (at 9%) than for House Sparrows. There were no regional differences in nest sites used. House Sparrows also favoured the roof space, with 53% of nesting sparrows observed in roofs. No less than 16% of records were of sparrows nesting in several different sites on a single building; a much higher proportion than shown by the other three species. House Sparrows were not recorded in thatched roofs in either Scotland or Wales, and less than 1% of English sparrows were in thatch (which may simply be a reflection of the relative scarcity of this type of roofing). In Wales, 9% of House Sparrows were nesting in old House Martin nests (3% and 5% in England and Scotland, respectively).

Discussion

Houses in this survey comprised proportionately more old properties when compared with Government figures for the age of houses in England (DETR data). Similarly, a dispropor-

tionately large number of questionnaire responses came from rural residents. For instance, 50% of returns from England came from rural residents whereas rural housing accounts for only 20% of England's housing stock (Countryside Agency data; www.countryside.gov.uk). Caution is needed, therefore, when extrapolating these results to the UK as a whole, owing to the over-representation of older and rural homes in the survey. Not only were there biases in the age and location of houses, but it is highly likely that people with nesting birds were much more likely to respond to this survey than people who had no nesting birds. Despite these potential biases, results which examine the proportions of houses occupied within age or settlement type categories are meaningful.

The survey revealed that houses built before 1919 are important as a source of nesting sites for all four species, but especially for Swifts, Starlings and House Sparrows. The results suggest that these three species prefer older, rural houses while, although House Martins prefer rural properties, they appear to be less selective of house age. Modern homes, particularly in urban areas, are infrequently used by nesting birds. Previous surveys of Swifts have shown that they rarely nest on buildings less than 30 years old and that they favour pre-1940s buildings in small towns and villages (Richardson 1979; Martin 1998).

In this survey, Swifts, Starlings and House Sparrows were most frequently found nesting in the roof space and eaves. Our results show that houses in which recent roof repairs had been undertaken were less likely to hold nesting Swifts and Starlings. This suggests that houses may well lose these species if roof repairs are made. In particular, for House Sparrows at least, dwellings built between 1945 and 1984 are more suitable if there have been no recent repairs. Older properties (up to 1944) seem unaffected by roof repairs, while post-1984 homes are less attractive for nesting sparrows, irrespective of whether repairs have been carried out or not (although repairs are rare in this category anyway). Newer buildings, incorporating modern materials and constructed to conform to current building regulations, seem to be generally less suitable because there is no

access to the roof space. Simple adjustments can, however, be incorporated into the design of new houses, and in repairs to old buildings, to cater for birds. These could include leaving small gaps in the ventilation mesh under the eaves every few metres to allow birds to gain access to the roof space (RSPB in prep.). As well as accessibility to nest sites on buildings, however, other key requirements are food, water, shelter and shade. For instance, House Martins need a local source of water and mud for nest-building, and nearby vegetation as a source of flying insect prey.

The response to our survey indicates that there is widespread concern about the status of these four species throughout the UK. The sensitive timing of roof repairs, allowing access to at least part of the roof space and providing suitable nestboxes are all steps which can be taken to help these species to nest successfully in human settlements.

Acknowledgments

The survey was initiated as a result of collaboration between the RSPB and the BBC Radio 4 'Today' programme, in particular Alisdair Bright of RSPB, and Claire Kendall and Tom Fielden at Radio 4. The survey was devised in consultation with Richard Gregory, Will Peach and Jeremy Wilson at the RSPB. Thanks go to Irene Hutson and Ellen Kelly for the data input.

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Letters

Does holotype 'priority' always serve nomenclature?

The confusion which surrounds the re-identification of 'type-specimens' has been highlighted twice recently. The first case involved Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*. Here, the type-specimen of *L. i. isabellinus* was re-identified by David Pearson as *L. i. speculigerus* (Pearson 2000). Adherence to the 'Principle of Priority', as defined in the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* (ICZN; 4th edn, London, 1999) means that the name *isabellinus* transfers to (former) *speculigerus* and that hitherto nominate *isabellinus* reverts to *arenarius*. In the second case, the type-specimen of 'Heuglin's Gull' *Larus heuglini heuglini* has been re-identified by V. A. Buzun as *taimyrensis*, or possibly an intergrade between *heuglini* and *taimyrensis* (*Brit. Birds* 95: 216-232). In this instance, the result is that *taimyrensis* becomes *heuglini* and *heuglini* becomes *antelius*. Both of these examples illustrate the confusion which results from tying a species or subspecies name in perpetuity to the Principle of Priority. In the latter case in particular, the redefinition remains doubly confused by the possibility that the holotype may be an intergrade, in which case a further revision of nomenclature becomes necessary. The resulting confusion and shuffling of names makes it near impossible to refer to these forms unambiguously. All references in the existing literature prior to the re-identification of the holotype also become misleading. This situation seems to me both counter-productive and unnecessary.

How were these re-identifications achieved? – quite simply by examination of characters against the *known morphology of the form*, based on experience and examination of a *series* of examples from the known breeding range. It is this latter experience which really defines the form, and it is surely counter-productive to change well-established nomenclature because of an artificial binding to a misidentified holotype. As noted by Valery Buzun himself, when a name such as *taimyrensis* aptly indicates the area of origin, redefining that name will meet with some resistance.

Clearly, the initial description of a new species will normally be based upon a holotype. Surely, however, the definition of a taxon, once well established and supported by experience

and research of the *population* and a series of correctly identified specimens (rather than an isolated example), should not be undermined by a misidentified holotype? In such cases, should not the holotype be declared invalid and type-specimen status transferred to a correctly identified neotype? That is surely a much more common-sense and stable approach than slavish adherence to 'priority' when a holotype proves to have been misidentified?

The ICZN (1999) notes within its 'Principles' that: 'Nomenclatural rules are tools that are designed to provide the maximum stability compatible with taxonomic freedom. Accordingly, the Code recognises that the rigid application of the Principle of Priority may, in certain cases, upset a long-accepted name in its accustomed meaning through the validation of a little-known, or even long-forgotten, name. Therefore, the rules must enable the Principle of Priority to be set aside on occasions when its application would be destructive of stability or universality, or would cause confusion. For use in such cases, the Code contains provisions that modify the automatic application of the Principle of Priority, whether it concerns the establishment or precedence of names, the fixation of name-bearing types, the spelling of a name, or any other matter.'

Furthermore, it includes the following two provisions under 'Article 75, Neotypes':

'75.5. Replacement of unidentifiable name-bearing type by a neotype. When an author considers the taxonomic identity of a nominal species-group taxon cannot be determined from its existing name-bearing type (i.e. the name is a *nomen dubium*), and stability or universality are threatened thereby, the author may request the Commission to set aside under its plenary powers [Art. 81] the existing name-bearing type and designate a neotype.

'75.6. Conservation of prevailing usage by a neotype. When an author discovers that the existing name-bearing type of a nominal species-group taxon is not in accord with the prevailing usage of names and stability or universality is threatened thereby, he or she should maintain prevailing usage [Art. 82] and request the Commission to set aside under its plenary powers [Art. 81] the existing name-bearing type

and designate a neotype.'

Taxonomy is beset by recondite terminology and definitions are not always what they seem, but it would appear that both controversial

identity (presumably including intergrades) and prevailing usage are factors which should be considered before an established name is set aside.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Richard Schodde and Walter J. Bock, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Ornithological Nomenclature, International Ornithological Committee, have commented as follows:

'In scientific zoological nomenclature, the function of the 'type' or 'type-specimen' is to carry and fix the name of the taxon to which it belongs: no more, no less. If a type is subsequently found to be 'misidentified' (the term used in the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature*, 4th edn, 1999 to mean not a member of the taxon for which the name is used), then the name is automatically transferred from the taxon with which it was disassociated to the one with which it is correctly identified. The types of genera and higher ranks are nominal taxa of a lower taxonomic rank, that is, the types of genera are nominal species and the types of families, nominal genera. The types of species-group names – species and subspecies – are, however, actual specimens. Fortunately, nearly all type-specimens are identified correctly in the original descriptions of species or subspecies, or have been sorted out by previous taxonomic study, at least in birds. Even so, some misidentifications have slipped through and are still being found.

'The changes in names which result from this will always cause some nomenclatural instability, and, as observed by Alan Dean, the *ICZN* (1999) makes special provisions for mitigation. Such provisions, however, are not only time-consuming to enact because they require ratification from the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature, but they can also create complications of their own. Moreover, they also contravene principles on which the Code is built, principles which "lose their teeth", if the rules affecting them are overridden for each and every problem or issue that comes along. So decisions on whether or not to move for mitigation are influenced by the seriousness of nomenclatural disturbance. Obviously, name changes affecting well-known and widely distributed species of birds are more serious, and will affect more professional and amateur ornithologists, than those for little-known subspecies with restricted distributions. Moreover, if the same name shifts from one taxon to another, it becomes a greater source of confusion and disturbance than if, for one reason or another, it simply drops out of use.

'The two cases raised by Alan Dean, and another published recently by Svensson (2001), exemplify such problems. Svensson's case is the simplest, and concerns the correct name of the Iberian Chiffchaff, known currently as *Phylloscopus brehmii* Homeyer, 1871. Svensson showed that what is probably the holotype of *brehmii* is a female Common Chiffchaff *P. collybita*. Although names for two well-recognised species come into conflict here, nomenclatural disturbance is minimal because (i) *brehmii* is junior to *collybita* and simply sinks into its synonymy; and (ii) the matching name *ibericus* Ticehurst, 1937, is at once available for the Iberian Chiffchaff. In this case, there appears to be little justification for any action that would maintain *brehmii* Homeyer as valid for the Iberian Chiffchaff. [The British Ornithologists' Union has now accepted *ibericus* Ticehurst as the specific name for the Iberian Chiffchaff – see p. 597.]

'Dean's two cases concern names which have shifted from one taxon to another, causing further nomenclatural change down the line. Since taxonomy has been in such a state of ongoing flux throughout the last century, however, the simplest way forward for both examples may be to let nomenclatural events take their normal course, given that only subspecific names appear to be concerned. One of the two cases concerns Buzun's (2002) re-identification of the type (= lectotype?) of *Larus heuglini* Heuglin, 1873. Here, the identity of the type-specimen itself is ambiguous, as Buzun's table 5 makes clear. In such circumstances, it seems premature to take any nomenclatural action other than to follow Buzun's conclusions until the forms of Heuglin's Gull and their types are better understood and identified. To do otherwise could interfere with future taxonomic arrangements in the group, something eschewed by the *ICZN* (1999) (Introduction: Principle 1).

'Options are clearer in the other case, which concerns the identity of the type (= lectotype) of the Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* Hemprich & Ehrenberg, 1828. The identity of the type was first worked out correctly by Hartert (1907), a circumstance overlooked in the modern review by Pearson (2000) partly because Hartert, followed by Stresemann (1927), considered Mongolian and Tarim-basin forms of the shrike to be consubspecific. Since Vaurie (1959), four forms of the shrike have been widely recognised, though with confounded names first misapplied by Stegmann (1930). Here there are two choices, about which the Standing Committee on Ornithological Nomenclature (SCON) of the International Ornithological Committee is divided in its opinion. One school of thought is to adopt Pearson's corrected nomenclature because it is combined with a sufficiently substantive and up-to-date taxonomic review. The other is to maintain the nomenclature of the second half of the twentieth century by setting aside the lectotype of *isabellinus* Hemprich & Ehrenberg, 1828 and neotypifying the name with a Mongolian specimen identifiable with the form hitherto known as *isabellinus*. In the circumstances, the SCON prefers to leave any action under the latter option to others, requiring as it would application to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature. In that event, however, the SCON would recommend in the strongest terms that any proposed neotype be lodged in the institution holding the present lectotype of *Lanius isabellinus* Hemprich & Ehrenberg.'

We are grateful to Siegfried Eck for information on the typification of *Lanius isabellinus*.

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The molecular phylogeny of thrushes

It seems a little disingenuous of Wink *et al.* (*Brit. Birds* 95: 349-355) to confine the discussion of their molecular family tree for Western Palearctic Turdidae to the not unexpected findings for the stonechats *Saxicola* when the rest of the table contains much more surprising things. Are Blackbirds *Turdus merula* really more closely related to Redwings *T. iliacus* than to Ring Ouzels *T. torquatus*, and Song Thrushes

T. philomelos closer to Fieldfares *T. pilaris* than any of them? And is the Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* really more closely related to wheatears *Oenanthe* than to the Common Redstart *P. phoenicurus* (implying a need to rearrange genera)? If so, have the wheatears lost a quivering red tail, or did the two redstarts develop it independently? Surely all this requires further explanation.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Prof. Michael Wink has replied as follows: 'The main objective of the paper in the July issue of *British Birds* was to discuss the evolutionary relationships of the stonechats *Saxicola*. Looking at the wider picture and extending the analysis to related turdids, the results appear to show that the two redstarts come from very different lineages, but to confirm this we need a study on a much broader scale, including all the various redstarts from Asia. The findings within the genus *Turdus* are also surprising, but we need to include more taxa, from both the Old and the New Worlds, to obtain a reliable picture. Undersampling can distort the true relationships, and, therefore, the results for related turdids are still preliminary at this stage and worthy of a much more detailed investigation.'

The call of Common Cuckoo

The note by Peter Woodruff on this topic (*Brit. Birds* 95: 23) prompts me to add the following observations, based on 34 years spent living in Pakistan. In the outer Himalayan foothills, I was able to observe at close quarters the Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, the Oriental Cuckoo *C. saturatus* and the much less common Lesser

Cuckoo *C. poliocephalus*, at times calling from the same area. I noted that the three species all kept their bills closed when calling, while the gular pouch, or throat, ballooned out visibly with each call. I recorded these observations in detail in *The Birds of Pakistan* (Roberts, 1991).

Dr T. J. Roberts

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Hawfinches in Wiltshire

Having spent all my birdwatching life living in good Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* country in Hampshire and Wiltshire, I found the recent paper in *BB* (Langston *et al.* 2002) particularly welcome. I was especially interested in the claim that, unlike almost all other counties analysed, there had been a sustained increase in Hawfinches in Wiltshire during the study period (1975-99).

In what could be perceived as an attempt to explain the apparent rise of Hawfinches in Wiltshire, the authors stated that it was one of three 'western counties close to the Severn Estuary' (together with Gwent and Gloucestershire) where increases had occurred. From this it could be implied that the majority of records during the period occurred in the northwest, closest to Gloucestershire (roughly north and west of a line from Trowbridge to Swindon). To test this, I examined Wiltshire Bird Reports (1974-99), noting localities and approximate numbers of individuals per year. By my reckoning, just 12% of the cumulative total of 292 individuals reported during this 26-year period occurred in the northwest, with 32% reported from the Marlborough district of the northeast, close to Berkshire, and 40% in the southeast, close to Hampshire, both counties which according to Langston *et al.* have experienced decreases. It may also be worth pointing out that in 1998, the year quoted in table 1 of the

paper, no Hawfinches were reported from northwest Wiltshire.

At the risk of appearing foolish, I do not find the evidence presented by Langston *et al.*, that Hawfinches have increased in Wiltshire during 1975-1999, compelling. The southeast of the county contributed 28% of all Hawfinches recorded in Wiltshire during 1980-89 and 61% during 1990-1999. As one of the few observers regularly contributing Hawfinch records from the southeast, I know that greater observer effort during the latter period, rather than population increase, has led to more reported sightings there. The presence of Hawfinches in southeast Wiltshire probably reflects the proximity of the New Forest, Hampshire, which is a well-known stronghold (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

In my view, variable observer effort, Hawfinch presence in areas of restricted public access and the possibility (noted by Langston *et al.*) of some redistribution of sites makes population trends uncertain in Wiltshire during the last quarter of the twentieth century.

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News and comment

Compiled by Adrian Pitches

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of *British Birds*

New from the BOU...

A suite of recommendations by the Taxonomic Sub-committee of the BOU Records Committee, which are pertinent to both the British List and the Western Palearctic region, were published in the most recent issue of *Ibis* (Knox *et al.* 2002). A selection of the key points of the recommendations are published below and *BB* will adopt the proposals outlined here; full details of several of these decisions will appear in *BB* shortly. The updated British List, which now starts with swans *Cygnus* following the decision to move the position of Galloanserae, can be viewed on the BOU website at <http://www.bou.org.uk/recbrlst/dna.html>

Flamingos *Phoenicopterus*

The following species are now recognised: Greater Flamingo *P. roseus* (monotypic), Caribbean Flamingo *P. ruber* (monotypic) and Chilean Flamingo *P. chilensis* (monotypic). Greater Flamingo is at present included in categories D and E of the British List, and Chilean Flamingo in category E.

Bustards *Chlamydotis*

The following species are now recognised: Houbara Bustard *C. undulata* (polytypic, with subspecies *undulata* and *fuertaventurae*) and Macqueen's Bustard *C. macqueenii* (monotypic). Of the two species, only Macqueen's Bustard has definitely occurred in Britain (Lincoln 1847; Yorkshire 1892, 1896; Aberdeenshire 1898). A fifth bird (Suffolk 1962) was not identified to race at the time, and the record is currently under review (see *Brit. Birds* 56: 399; plate 61). Macqueen's Bustard has therefore been placed in Category B of the British List.

Hippolais warblers

Of particular interest as far as the British List is concerned, the following species are now recognised: Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *H. pallida* (polytypic, with subspecies *reiseri*, *laeneni*, *pallida*, *elaica*); Western Olivaceous Warbler *H. opaca* (monotypic); Booted Warbler *H. caligata* (monotypic); and Sykes's Warbler *H. rama* (monotypic).

The position of Western Olivaceous Warbler on the British List is under review, but these changes mean that Sykes's Warbler is now formally admitted to the British List. Currently, there is just one accepted record (Seafield, Shetland, October 1993) but other records are under review. By contrast, 'Caspian Reed Warbler' *Acrocephalus scirpaceus fuscus* is retained as a subspecies of Reed Warbler.

Crows *Corvus*

It is recommended that Carrion Crow *C. corone* and Hooded Crow *C. cornix* be regarded as semispecies, and treated as separate species. Carrion Crow *C. corone* is polytypic (the race which occurs in Britain being *C. c. corone*); Hooded Crow *C. cornix* is also polytypic, *C. c. cornix* being the race which occurs in Britain.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

The forms *plumbeitarsus* ('Two-barred Greenish Warbler') and *nitidus* ('Green Warbler') are retained as subspecies of Greenish Warbler.

Scientific names

The following changes to scientific names are proposed: Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* (changed from *C. hybridus*); Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus* (changed from *P. brehmii*); Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla* (changed from *R. ignicapillus*); Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla* (changed from *S. aurocapillus*); and Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephala* (changed from *E. leucocephalos*).

Knox, A. G., Collinson, M., Helbig, A. J., Parkin, D.T., & Sangster, G. 2002.
Taxonomic recommendations for British birds. *Ibis* 144: 707-710.

Effective cull will be Ruddy expensive

The conclusions of the experimental cull of Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* in the UK have now been published by DEFRA. Reducing the population by 95% will take up to seven years and could cost £5.5 million. The argument for control is familiar (even if opinions about its validity remain deeply divided) – that the globally threatened White-headed Duck *O. leucocephala* may be wiped out by hybridisation with Ruddy Ducks. The controversial control trial was conducted between April 1999 and May 2002 in several areas (in Avon, Fife, Gloucestershire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, the West Midlands and on Anglesey) and a total of 2,651 Ruddy Ducks were killed.

According to the report: 'The regional Ruddy Duck Control Trial was established to determine the feasibility, costs and access requirements necessary to reduce the UK Ruddy Duck population to less than 175 birds in ten years. This figure was chosen as representing a 95% reduction in the estimated population of 3,500 at the time of the decision to proceed with regional trials [subsequent reports, however, suggest that the UK Ruddy Duck population was more like 6,000 birds than 3,500 in January 2000]. An assessment of the effect of the Control Trial on the national population suggests that there is an 80% probability that the population can be reduced to fewer than 175 birds in between five and seven years at a total cost of £3.9 million to £5.5 million.'

Is £5.5 million to control the Ruddy Duck money well spent? Or could it be better spent on buying up wetlands in Spain, Morocco and Turkey?

Link: www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/scientific/ruddy/1.htm

Migrants sacrificed to ease EU expansion

International co-operation to safeguard threatened species is a laudable concept, but while the UK and Spain move to protect the White-headed Duck, they and their fellow EU members seem content for other Red List species to be sacrificed on the altar of political expediency. In the run-up to the EU summit in Copenhagen in December, at which the applications for membership by a further 10 countries will be rubber-stamped for entry in 2004, it appears that Malta has won a derogation from the EU Birds Directive. According to *The Times of Malta*, a deal with the EU has been struck which will make Malta the only member state in which hunting in spring is permitted. Specifically, it seems that Malta will be (temporarily?) allowed to continue spring shooting of Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* and Turtle Dove

Streptopelia turtur (both Red List species), and the trapping of seven species of finches (Fringillidae). On trapping, the deal states that Malta must establish a full captive breeding system for songbirds by 2008. A moratorium on new trapping licences will be in place during a transition period which will last until the end of 2008, but current licence holders will not be affected. Both trapping and spring hunting are banned under the Birds Directive.

BirdLife Malta has denounced the deal, which sets a very dangerous precedent that other southern European nations will be clamouring to follow (Cyprus, which has a migrant-massacring reputation to rival that of Malta, is also set to join the EU in December). The 15,000 hunters on Malta are a significant political lobby, and the Maltese Govern-

ment will need their votes in the referendum on EU membership that will be called next year. But why should EU negotiators agree to such a flagrant breach of a landmark directive? Surely the EU should set strict terms for entry, including adherence to the Birds Directive. The Copenhagen summit is still a month away, so if you wish to put pressure on the UK Government to prevent compromising laws which other European countries have successfully abided by for more than 20 years, write to: Rt Hon Peter Hain MP, Minister for Europe, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, King Charles Street, London SW1A 2AH, demanding that he insists on full application of the EU Birds Directive, with no exceptions for Malta. Please copy your letter (and any reply you receive) to Sarah Burr at the RSPB (sarah.burr@rspb.org.uk).

Cliffe campaign gathers momentum

Of course, the UK will be breaching both the Birds Directive and the Habitat Directive if tentative proposals for a new London airport on the North Kent marshes are ever cleared for take-off. The NoAirport@Cliffe campaigners raised their profile further on 28th September with 'Birdwatch for Cliffe' day. Congratulations are due to all those birders nationwide who pooled their sightings on the day: 247 species was the aggregate UK total.

Alan Parker, RSPB warden at Northward Hill, birdwatched solely on the actual footprint of the proposed airport and logged 99 species, the highest total from any one site in the UK (beating his colleagues at Minsmere in Suffolk by one species). His tally was further evidence of the species richness and conservation importance of the North Kent marshes.

No Port @ Thurrock?

Meanwhile, across the Thames estuary in Essex, another major development could have serious implications for birds and a knock-on effect across the river at Cliffe. Shipping company P&O plans to build a deep-water port for container ships, bulk carriers and possibly passenger ferries on the site of the former Shell refinery at Thurrock, which, according to P&O, would also create 16,000 jobs. A public inquiry is scheduled to start in January 2003, while local people have formed the Shellhaven Project Environmental Action Committee (SPEAC) to oppose industrial expansion well beyond the boundaries of the old refinery.

This expansion threatens mudflats and grazing marshes which support waders and wildfowl, notably a wintering flock of Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* (no fewer than 1,100 were recorded in February 2002). Compulsory purchase orders issued by P&O include parts of Essex Wildlife Trust's Stanford Warren reserve, which has the largest reedbed in southern Essex with breeding Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti* and Bearded Tits *Panurus biarmicus*.

In mitigation for the mudflats destroyed on the north (Essex) shore of the estuary, P&O may be required to create new mudflats on the south bank, in North Kent. Apparently, compulsory purchase orders have already been issued to farmers in the Cliffe area. The intention is to flood 700 acres of grazing marsh and revert it to mudflats by shifting the seawall one mile inland. The North Kent marshes are under siege from all sides.

Link: www.speac.org.uk

New Recorder for Fife

At the end of December, Dougie Dickson will stand down after 18 years as Recorder for Fife. David Ogilvie will be taking over from Dougie, and his address is 25 St Fillans Road, Kirkcaldy, Fife KY2 6LT.

Sad ending to satellite soap opera

'Come in number 21250, your time is up.' So it has proved for a young European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivornis*, satellite-tagged in the Scottish Highlands and tracked south on its first autumn migration. Regular updates on the Internet, following the bird's departure from Inverness on 15th September, gripped the public imagination as its fateful journey was tracked. By 22nd September it had flown 500 km south and was logged near Bridgend in South Wales. On 24th September, however, it was located over the Atlantic, 660 km west of Land's End, and later that day it was 700 km WSW of Cape Clear. When the signals resumed on 26th September, the raptor was still flying over open sea, having just missed the Azores.

For a raptor to fly continuously over open water for three days without food or rest is an amazing feat. It was hoped that strong westerly winds might blow it towards the Canary Islands or Africa and, overnight on 27th/28th September, the signal came from 280 km northwest of Madeira. By now it had been in the air for more than 100 hours. Subsequent signals showed that the bird was moving slowly southwest, presumably drowned and drifting on the sea, after an incredible 5,000-km journey.

The father of 21250 was trapped on the nest and satellite-tagged at the same time as the juvenile. The adult left the Highlands on 5th September and by 2nd October was safely in the forests of northern Ghana, a journey of 6,239 km. On 6th October it was still heading east and was logged in Benin.

Link: www.roydennis.org

Wild goose chase ends in the freezer

The hapless Highland honey-buzzard was not the only bird satellite-tracked to an untimely end this year. Scientists tracking satellite-tagged Light-bellied Brent Geese *Branta bernicla hrota* from their winter refuge in Northern Ireland to their breeding grounds in Canada were puzzled by one which was remarkably static after its arrival in the Arctic. Kerry was one of six Brent Geese fitted with a satellite backpack before a spring migration involving a long sea crossing to Iceland, then a perilous 3,000-km flight over the Greenland ice cap to the Queen Elizabeth Islands in Canada.

WWT's James Robinson takes up the story at the point where his colleagues picked up Kerry's signal on arrival in Canada. 'They had looked in all the fjords and lakes on Cornwallis Island... but with no success at all. Then, as they were walking back into town, their receiver started beeping more strongly. They tracked the beeps to a house, knocked on the door, and discovered that the guy who lived there had shot Kerry on another island, Bathurst Island. Kerry was in the hunter's freezer. He hadn't been plucked and the transponder was still on him. The hunter was somewhat surprised: he didn't know what the device on the goose's back was!'

Of the five other geese tagged in May, Arnthor is also thought to have been shot (his transponder stopped beeping abruptly over Disko Island on the west coast of Greenland, where illegal spring hunting is known to occur), while Oscar died in Iceland, perhaps killed by a bird of prey. Three made it to the breeding grounds: Austin was logged on the western tip of Ellesmere Island, Hugh on Amund Ringnes Island, and Major Ruttledge is believed to have reached Graham Island. On 29th September, when the transponders' batteries expired, Hugh had returned safely to Strangford Lough and Major Ruttledge was in Iceland. Austin was still on Ellesmere Island on 19th September.

Link: www.wwt.org.uk/brent

Giant cork eagle lands in Cornwall

Not a prehistoric raptor from Ireland, but an outsize eagle, constructed from 350,000 corks. The sculpture, by Cornish artist Robert Bradford and using corks selflessly collected by RSPB members, will raise awareness of the threat posed to the Cork Oak *Quercus suber* forests of Portugal and Spain by the increasing use of plastic stoppers and screw caps in wine bottles. The sculpture is on display at Cornwall's biggest eco-tourist attraction, the Eden Project. There are just 130 pairs of Spanish Imperial Eagles *Aquila adalberti* left in the world and they are dependent on Cork Oak forest.

The RSPB is calling on UK supermarkets and wine retailers to label wine bottles with the type of stopper used so that shoppers know what they are buying. Cork is a wonderful example of a sustainable industry: local farming communities and wildlife happily co-exist in the Cork Oak forests of Portugal and Spain, and have done so for centuries. The cork bark can be harvested many times over a long period, ensuring the survival of both the trees and the cork industry, as well as the people and wildlife which depend on them.

Marks & Spencer, Waitrose and Somerfield have all introduced labelling, and Tesco label their on-line wines. A suitable slogan might be 'Put a cork in it!'

BTML

The Bernard Tucker Memorial Lecture, organised by Oxford Ornithological Society together with the Ashmolean Natural History Society, and sponsored by *British Birds*, will be held at the University Museum of Natural History, Parks Road, Oxford, at 8.00 p.m. on Tuesday 5th November. The speaker this year will be Dr Janet Kear, and the subject will be cavity-nesting ducks. The BTML always provides a stimulating evening's entertainment – get there if you can.

Obituary

Professor L. S. Stepanyan (1931-2002)

Professor Leo Surenovich Stepanyan, who died in Moscow on 16th February 2002 following an illness, made an outstanding contribution to ornithology, primarily as a taxonomist. He was born on 19th March 1931 in Yerevan, Armenia, his Armenian father and Russian mother having been posted there from the Russian capital. Subsequent moves were to Kislovodsk on the north side of the Caucasus in 1937, then to nearby Yessentuki, evacuation after the outbreak of the Second World War to Kyrgyzstan in 1941, to the Crimea in 1945 and, soon afterwards, the return to Yessentuki, where Leo completed his secondary education in 1950. Leo first became interested in birds when about 10 or 12 years old, and began his own collections of birds and their eggs in 1946-1947.

Immediately after leaving school, he became a student at the Department of Vertebrate Zoology of Moscow State University, graduating in 1955. It was during his student days that he began actively to study birds and he also undertook expeditions to areas of the former Soviet Union relatively poorly known ornithologically (e.g. the Tien Shan mountains). In 1962, Leo gained his Candidate Degree (PhD) with a thesis based on data and specimens collected in the Terskey Ala Too range of the Tien Shan. While still a student, he became intimately acquainted with many of the country's leading ornithologists, who were then working on the multi-volume *Birds of the Soviet Union* with Georgiy Petrovich Dement'ev as Chief Editor. The new information and specimens from Leo Surenovich's expeditions aroused great interest among them. The person to have had the greatest influence on him was undoubtedly Dement'ev, while E. P. Spangenberg was most influential as a field ornithologist.

After graduating, Leo Surenovich worked in Moscow University's Zoological Museum, but after two years he changed to a teaching job, in the Department of Zoology and Darwinism at the Moscow State Pedagogic Institute, where he is still remembered as a first-rate lecturer. Teaching, however, restricted the possibilities for expeditions and ornithological research, and in 1975 he took up a new post, still in Moscow, as Senior Research Assistant, in what is now called the A. N. Severtsov Institute of Ecology

and Evolution (Russian Academy of Sciences); he later became Research Director. In 1991, he was persuaded to defend a doctoral dissertation (for the degree of DSc) based on his 1983 book *Superspecies and sibling species in the avifauna of the USSR*.

Leo Surenovich wrote some 230 scientific works, almost always as the sole author, mostly papers, but including six books. Proof of his capacity for hard work is the fact that, while still a teacher, he managed to write two books, *Composition and distribution of the bird fauna of the USSR* (1975, 1978). These, and the later *Conspectus of the bird fauna of the USSR* (1990), and also *Superspecies and sibling species* (1983), are Stepanyan's best-known works in the former USSR and probably outside the country as well. They made him the leading authority on taxonomy, nomenclature and the composition of the avifauna of the former USSR, and the most frequently cited author in Russia on ornithological topics, which is likely to continue for many years to come. Leo became virtually a one-man information bureau for Moscow's ornithologists, not only on taxonomy, but on general biology and its history. Among subspecies first described by Stepanyan for the territory of the USSR are *Accipiter nisus dementjevi* (1958), *Passer ammodendri nigricans* (1961), *Paradoxornis hendei polivanovi* (1974), *Regulus ignicapillus caucasicus* (1998) and, most recently, *Certhia brachydactyla rossocaucasica* Stepanyan (2000). A supporter of the Biological Species Concept, he nevertheless accepted many now widely recognised taxonomic revisions – e.g. *Gavia pacifica* and *Anas carolinensis* – quite early (before 1986).

Within the borders of the former USSR, Leo Surenovich took part in about 30 expeditions between 1949 and 1978, destinations including the Caucasus, southwest Caspian, Pamir and Tien Shan mountains, Sakhalin and Kunashir (Kuril Islands), and also Mongolia. Outside the former USSR, it was Vietnam which commanded his attention. He worked mainly in primary tropical rainforest in the southern part of Central Annam and his book *Birds of Vietnam* (1995) describes about half of the breeding bird fauna. He continued working on and interpreting the material he had collected

in Vietnam practically to the end of his life.

Leo Surenovich was an enthusiastic collector of bird books and his library contained many old and rare items, which colleagues were welcome to consult. He also collected birds, using a strictly selective approach and employing great skill in the preparation of specimens. Many of the skins were deposited in Russian museums, while much of the Vietnamese collection was donated to the Science Research Centre in Hanoi. His private collection of 2,784 skins greatly facilitated his scientific work.

Leo Surenovich was unusually attentive and considerate towards those closest to him and undoubtedly gave and received much happiness within his family. Here was a man for whom the most wonderful creatures in the world were women, falcons and tigers, someone who was never in a hurry, and who knew how to enjoy life. With a glass of brandy and a pipe of good tobacco, he emanated harmony and was a bril-

liant conversationalist. Other interests apart from ornithology included jazz, world history and the world's main religions. A love of classical literature showed itself in his ability to recite much of Alexander Pushkin's 'Eugene Onegin' by heart and in the impressive eloquence and clarity of expression which characterised his own spoken and written Russian.

He greatly benefited from the constant support and assistance of his wife, Elena Nikolaevna, who herself has followed an ornithological career. Her help was also vital in the revision of Stepanyan's *Conspectus* (1990), on which he worked up until the last few days before his death, happily managing to complete the task. Publication of a new edition in 2002 will be a fitting tribute to Leo Surenovich Stepanyan's remarkable life. He is survived by Elena Nikolaevna, their son, Igor, and his brother, Valeriy Surenovich.

Andrey V. Filchagov and Michael G. Wilson

Review

RSPB HANDBOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

By Peter Holden and Tim Cleeves. Christopher Helm, A&C Black, London. 303 pages; colour plates. ISBN 0-7136-5713-8. Paperback, £9.99.

Oh, no! Not another field guide to the birds of Britain & Ireland! Well, yes – and no. This *is* another guide to British birds but it is far more than just a field guide. It is a wealth of information about the habits, habitats, food, breeding, migration, population and conservation status of the 280 most common species recorded in Britain and Ireland. As such, it lives up to its title of 'Handbook', and with illustrations culled from that other Helm Handbook, *The Handbook of Bird Identification* (Beaman and Madge 1998), the identification section for

each species is also first rate. The illustrations certainly merit recycling, with plates by Hilary Burn, Martin Elliott, Alan Harris, Peter Hayman, the late Laurel Tucker, and Dan Zetterström.

The Handbook authors, both long-serving RSPB staffers, have condensed a great deal of information within its 300 pages, all of it bang up to date. One feature of the book which is particularly appropriate for an RSPB-branded publication is the colour-coded header to each species account to show the conservation status of that species. So, for example, Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis* has a red page heading, that of Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica* is amber and that of Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* is green. Category C breeding species and passage migrants/vagrants are given a neutral-coloured page heading. Incidentally, among the species that make it into the 280 'commonest' birds are King Eider *Somateria spectabilis*, Ruddy Shel-

duck *Tadorna ferruginea* and Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*.

The taxonomy is also contemporary: Lesser Redpoll *Carduelis cabaret* and Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea* have separate entries. And the authors are not afraid to grasp the taxonomic nettle: Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans* has specific status too. The distribution maps are clearly colour-coded and again are up to date. The scale of the maps does mean that some colour 'blobs' are quite generous, however, so that, for example, Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* appears to breed across much of central England.

This is a book for beginner and veteran alike as there is so much information available in one very portable reference book, priced at just under a tenner. There is even a handy list of alternative bird names. What *is* a Yarwelp? Buy this book and find out.

Adrian Pitches



Monthly Marathon

Clearly, the bird in photograph number 190 (repeated here as plate 321) is a wader, and its long legs, especially the long tibia, and the fact that it is feeding in deep water allow us to rule out all the small species. This is undoubtedly a medium-sized wader and everything about it probably shouted 'shank' or 'yellowlegs' *Tringa* to most *BB* readers. Common Redshank *T. totanus* and Spotted Redshank *T. erythropus* can be ruled out on leg colour. The smaller *Tringa* sandpipers (Green *T. ochropus*, Wood *T. glareola* and Solitary *T. solitaria*) could show similar leg colour, but can also be ruled out by the very long tibia. This leaves us with four species which could fit the bird in this photo: Marsh Sandpiper *T. stagnatilis*, Greenshank *T. nebularia*, Greater Yellowlegs *T. melanoleuca* and Lesser Yellowlegs *T. flavipes*. Perhaps we should pause at this point and try to age the bird as, with shorebirds especially, seasonal- and age-related plumage

variation can often have a critical bearing on identification. All four of our suspect species show rather plain upperparts in winter plumage, essentially uniform greyish in the first two, similar but finely spotted with white in the two yellowlegs. Juveniles of all four species have more patterned upperparts than winter adults but, as in virtually all shorebirds, juvenile plumage is characterised by a neat, 'feather perfect' look not exhibited by the mystery bird. Our bird has rather variegated upperparts, with some feathers being much more



Richard Chandler

321. Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*, Texas, USA, April 1994.

boldly patterned than others and this indicates that it is an adult in breeding plumage. The breeding plumage of Marsh Sandpiper can be easily eliminated because it has uniquely patterned black-spotted/banded upperparts; it also lacks the significant primary projection shown by our mystery bird. In breeding plumage, Greenshank may have extensive black centres to some of the scapulars, but these, and the tertials, are never deeply notched with white as in the mystery bird. This leaves us then with the two yellowlegs, notoriously similar species best told apart by bill length and call: neither of which is going to be of any help here! In full breeding plumage (the combination of rather worn greater coverts and the lack of any fresh non-breeding feathers suggests that the bird is neither moulting into, nor out of, breeding plumage), the flanks are generally much more heavily barred in Greater Yellowlegs than in Lesser, and in this respect our bird looks more like a Lesser. The long primary projection beyond the tertials (comprising four tips) and the comparatively long projection of the primaries beyond the tail are further indicators of Lesser, though note that the differences in primary projection and projection of the



322. 'Monthly Marathon'. Photo no. 193. Ninth stage in twelfth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules (see page 36), then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, c/o The Banks, Mountfield, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JY, or by e-mail to editor@britishbirds.co.uk, to arrive by 31st December 2002.

Monthly Marathon

wing-tip beyond the tail are more useful in distinguishing the two species in adult breeding rather than juvenile plumage. As juveniles, the two species can have a more similar folded wing-tip versus tail ratio. It may also be the case that the longer bill of a Greater Yellowlegs would be fractionally more prominent viewed at this angle, but that really is guesswork! This Lesser Yellowlegs was photographed by Richard Chandler in Texas in April 1994.

With this month's picture being the first to be reproduced at a dramatically larger size than earlier Monthly Marathon pictures, it is quite possible that some contestants 'lost their bearings' a little and perceived this bird as being bigger than it actually is. So although the majority were not fooled and named the bird correctly as a Lesser Yellowlegs, 14% plumped for Greater Yellowlegs, while there were a few votes for other *Tringa* species. Jon Holt's answer was

correct, which leaves him out in front with a sequence of two-in-a-row.

David Fisher and
Killian Mullarney

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Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary of unchecked reports covers mid September to mid October 2002.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* Seaton Sluice (Northumberland), 14th September, presumed same Hartlepool Headland (Cleveland), 14th September; Fraserburgh (Northeast Scotland), 7th October. **Black-browed Albatross** *Thalasarche melanophris* Spurn (East Yorkshire), 22nd September. **'Soft-plumaged petrel'** *Pterodroma madeira/feae/mollis* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 21st September; Flamborough Head (East Yorkshire), Whitburn and other coastal localities to the north (all Co. Durham), and Farne Islands (Northumberland), all presumably same, 23rd September. **Sooty Shearwater** *Puffinus griseus* A large movement off the east coast of Scotland and England included 2,647 past Flamborough Head and 1,914 past Hartlepool Headland, both on 22nd September, with 696 past the Farne Islands on 23rd September and 1,701 past Flamborough Head on 6th October. **Great White Egret** *Egretta alba* Lady's Island Lake (Co. Wexford), 21st-22nd September. **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* Cotswold Water Park (Wiltshire), 24th-30th September. **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* St Mary's (Scilly), 23rd September.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* Nanjizal (Cornwall), 16th September; Birsay (Orkney), 24th September; Bowness (Cumbria), 6th October. **Pacific Golden Plover**

Pluvialis fulva Whitburn, 18th-30th September. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* Ferrybridge (Dorset), 13th-14th September; Tory Island (Co. Donegal), 14th-15th September. **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* Lisagriffin (Co. Cork), 11th-13th September. **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* Shannon Airport Lagoons (Co. Clare), 20th-26th September. **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire), 13th September; South Anston (South Yorkshire), 20th September; Wheldrake Ings (North Yorkshire), 25th September to 5th October with a second nearby on 5th October. **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* Corton (Suffolk), 13th September. **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Foula (Shetland), 21st-27th September; plus



Hugh Harrop

323. White's Thrush *Zosterops dauma*, Fair Isle, Shetland, September 2002.



Ross McGregor

324. Veery *Catharus fuscescens* North Ronaldsay, Orkney, September 2002.

three in Ireland in early October (one in Co. Cork, two in Co. Clare). **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* Lady's Island Lake, 5th-7th October; Freiston (Lincolnshire), 6th October. **Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria* Rye Meads (Hertfordshire), 13th-15th September. **Little Gull** *Larus minutus* Good numbers along the North Sea coast, including 4,992 past Flamborough Head on 27th September, and 2,660 past there on 6th October. **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* Shropshire's Reservoir (Cambridgeshire), 24th-26th September.

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* Carn Glouce/Botallack Head area (Cornwall), 23rd September; Fair Isle (Shetland), 30th Sep-



Bill Boston

325. Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*, Old Hunstanton, Norfolk, September 2002.

tember. **Pechora Pipit** *Anthus gustavi* Two, Fair Isle, 26th-27th September; one remaining to 28th September, and one there 5th-7th October; Kergord (Shetland), 5th October. **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* Unst (Shetland), 20th September; Fair Isle, 22nd September; Rocky Point (Co. Donegal), 24th-27th September; Flamborough Head, 27th-30th September; Tresco (Scilly), 2nd October; St Martin's (Scilly), 4th-7th October; Strumble Head (Pembrokeshire), 5th October. **Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus* Marsden Quarry (Co. Durham), 7th October; Lerwick (Shetland), 11th-13th October. **Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* Dunkettle (Co. Cork), 13th October. **White's Thrush** *Zoothera dauma* Fair Isle, 29th-30th September; North Collafirth (Shetland), 30th September. **Veery** *Catharus fuscescens* North Ronaldsay, 30th September to 6th October.

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* Annet (Scilly), 22nd-23rd September. **River Warbler** *Locustella fluviatilis* Fair Isle, 21st-25th September. **Blyth's Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum* Barra (Western Isles), 24th-25th September. **Booted Warbler** *Hippolais caligata* St Kilda (Western Isles), 13th September. **Sub-alpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans* Crookhaven (Co. Cork), 4th-8th October. **Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* Old Hunstanton (Norfolk), 29th September to 7th October. **Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Spurn, 14th-18th September; Weybourne (Norfolk), 17th-18th September; Walney Island (Cumbria), 19th September. **Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis* Holy Island (Northumberland), 13th-15th September; Barra, 23rd-26th September. **Western Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli* Pendeen (Cornwall), 21st September; St Martin's, 4th-6th October. **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* Fetlar (Shetland), 14th-17th September. **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* St Agnes (Scilly), 14th-15th September; Portland (Dorset), 21st September; Lizard village (Cornwall), 22nd September. **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* St Mary's (Scilly), 5th-7th October. **Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza melanocephala* Gunton (Suffolk), 24th-25th September.

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Scarce migrants in 2000

Non-native birds breeding in 2000

Balearic and Yelkouan Shearwaters

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Report on scarce migrant birds in Britain in 2000

Peter A. Fraser and Michael J. Rogers

ABSTRACT For this, the sixth annual report on accepted records of scarce migrant birds in Britain, covering the year 2000, information was obtained from County and Regional Bird Recorders and local bird reports.

The year 2000 was similar in many ways to 1999 for records of the species in this report, although some species were reported in higher numbers than ever before. One of the undoubted highlights was the largest and most extensive movement of European Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* ever recorded in Britain. In addition, there were notably large numbers of Cory's Shearwaters *Calonectris diomedea* and, like 1999, Nearctic ducks (including Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*, Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* and Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*). There were also record numbers of both Common Rosefinches *Carpodacus erythrinus* and Little Buntings *Emberiza pusilla* in autumn, two species which are undergoing both population and range expansion westwards. By contrast, it was the worst year ever for both Hoopoes *Upupa epops* and Icterine Warblers *Hippolais icterina*, and there were disappointingly low numbers of Kentish Plovers *Charadrius alexandrinus*, Melodious Warblers *Hippolais polyglotta*, Barred Warblers *Sylvia nisoria*, Red-breasted Flycatchers *Ficedula parva* and Ortolan Buntings *Emberiza hortulana*.

This is the sixth annual report on scarce migrant birds in Britain. It follows a similar format to the fifth report (*Brit. Birds* 94: 560-589), but contains three fewer species. This year, we have reluctantly omitted Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus*, Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* and Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*, because the data we receive are just too incomplete to permit a national analysis. Additional data for each species treated here may be found in the 'Scarce Migrants' section of the BBRC website (www.bbrc.org.uk).

Only those records which have been assessed and accepted by the appropriate local, regional or national record panels have been included in this report. Every year, the time taken to assemble the

data (including the records assessment process) varies considerably between counties. Consequently, and despite the willing and enthusiastic co-operation of nearly all of Britain's County Recorders and their assistants, this report has to be published well after the year in question. Even then, many or all records from a few counties and sub-counties are not included. Current gaps in the source material for the scarce migrants database can be seen on the BBRC website (see above for details) and recorders are still urged to submit data for 2000 and previous years if they have not already done so. Statistics have been updated for previous years as they have become available, even if this was after the publication of the report in question. In a few cases (notably, this year, for Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexan-*

drinus), this may alter the statistics for previous years quite dramatically. Note that, in this report, the statistics for the 'decade means' (presented in each species table) give the revised mean for 1990-1999, and do not include 2000 data. In the next report, the mean for the 2000s will be given separately.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank most sincerely the county and regional recorders and their assistants for providing such detailed information for 2000 and for supplying additional records for past years where appropriate. Without their ready co-operation, this report would not have been possible.

Systematic list

Interpretation of the statistics used and quoted in the species accounts should take into consideration the following points:

- Increasing numbers of field observers, armed with greater knowledge and

improved mobility and spending more time in the field, must, to some extent, be responsible for the increase in the recorded numbers of certain species.

- Known breeding individuals (e.g. of Red-necked Phalaropes *Phalaropus lobatus*) have been excluded from the report.
- Individuals remaining from one year to the next (e.g. overwintering Surf Scoters *Melanitta perspicillata*) have been counted only in their year of arrival.
- Returning individuals (e.g. of Ring-billed Gulls *Larus delawarensis*) have, where possible, been counted only in their year of arrival, unless stated otherwise.
- Known escapes from captivity (e.g. some White Storks *Ciconia ciconia*) have been excluded.
- Statistics for some species for 2000 and, to a lesser degree, for earlier years are incomplete because of the unavailability of data from some counties.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1958-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2000			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1998	1999	1980	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
2,294	22,365	4	5,116	3,634	2,851	14	18	453	1,519

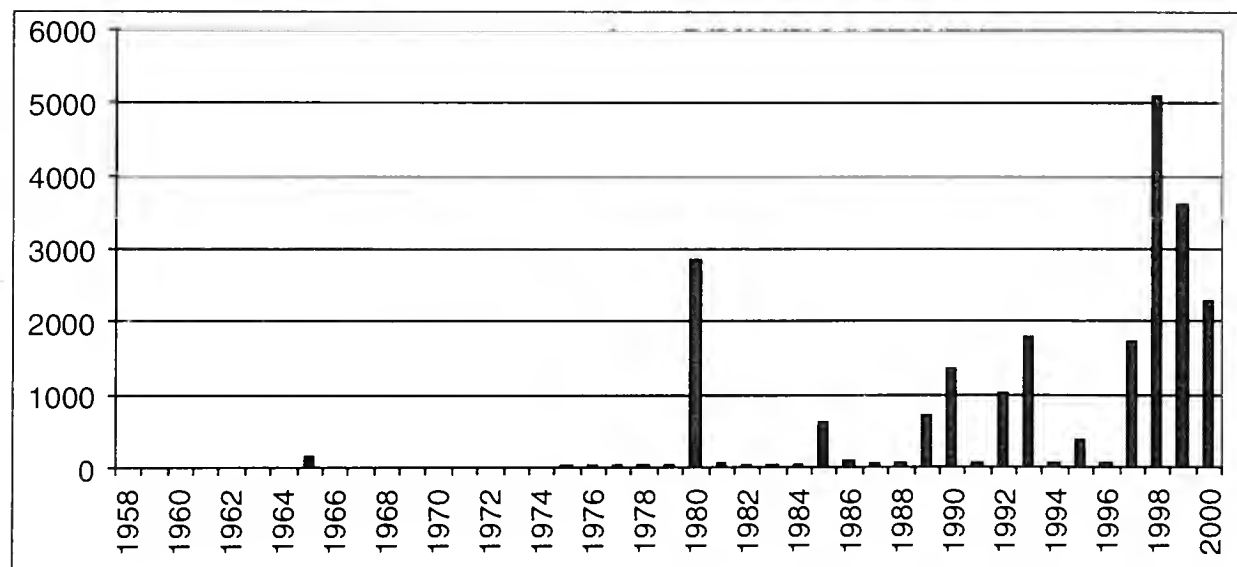


Fig. 1. Annual totals of Cory's Shearwaters *Calonectris diomedea* in Britain, 1958-2000.

An estimated 2,294 Cory's Shearwaters were seen in 2000, only the fourth time that more than 2,000 have been seen in a single year. Fig. 1 shows that an extraordinarily high proportion of records since 1958 have occurred in the 1990s; it also emphasises the exceptional autumn movement in 1980. The overall pattern of records remains much as in previous years, with the majority seen in southwest

Britain between July and September. The highest numbers reported (949) were in Cornwall, with 642 in Scilly and 676 in sea area Sole. One in Bluemull Sound, Shetland, on 8th August was only the fifth in Shetland waters in the past 30 years. Late records included one off Ventnor, Isle of Wight, on 21st November, and one seen from several sites along the Bristol Channel on 26th November.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1958-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2000			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1987	1999	1970	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
18	707	19	35	32	28	7	19	21	20

In 2000, records came from eleven counties or areas, with Kent and Dorset having three each, while there were two in three other counties (Norfolk, Hampshire and Scilly). One at Lantonside, Dumfries & Galloway, on 24th-25th October, was only the 18th record in Scotland since 1958. Of the 17 other individuals which appeared in 2000, none was north of Norfolk. Eleven arrived between April and June, one was seen in Hampshire in July, and the remaining six were in autumn, the Scottish one being the last of the year.

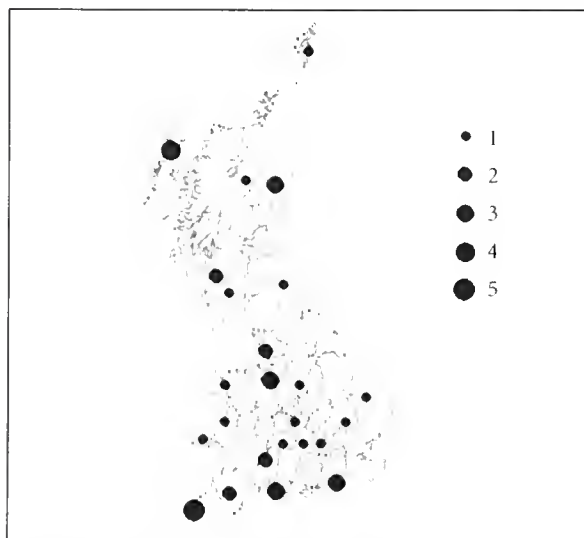
White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1958-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2000			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1998	1986	1977	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
11	557	20	55	48	39	2	16	15	21

The true status of White Stork in Britain continues to be clouded by birds which may have originated from captive stock. For example, a bird carrying a black darvic ring marked with the letters 'AX' appeared in Gloucestershire, Essex, Buckinghamshire and probably Wiltshire (which also demonstrates just how mobile this species can be). This individual has been counted in the totals, but we would welcome further information on its origins.

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1958-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2000			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1999	2000	1996	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
42	480	2	47	42	30	2	6	12	23



The 42 Green-winged Teals reported in 2000 represent another good showing for this species, following the record influx of 1999 (note the revised 1999 total, published in the table above). The total in 2000 excludes those individuals returning to sites occupied in 1999, which were included in that year's total. The distribution of presumed newly arrived birds in 2000 is shown in fig. 2. This illustrates a wide scatter of records but also, as might be expected, good numbers in Cornwall (five) and the Western Isles (four).

Fig. 2. Distribution of presumed newly arrived Green-winged Teals *Anas carolinensis* in Britain in 2000.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1958-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2000		Annual means 1958-1999			
			1999/1980	2000/1979	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
26	373	3=	28	26	1	8	13	13

Numbers of Ring-necked Ducks in Britain appear to show a tendency to rise and fall in a roughly ten-year cycle, with large numbers in three years between 1977 and 1980, and again in two years between 1988 and 1990, so it will be interesting to see whether the increase apparent in 1999-2000 will be sustained, or whether numbers will again decline. As with Green-winged Teal, individuals returning to the same or neighbouring sites have been excluded so that the data refer solely to presumed new arrivals. Up to eight new birds were reported in Cornwall, but there were no more than two new individuals in any other county.



Iain Leach

326. Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* (left) with Tufted Duck *A. fuligula*, South Muskham, Nottinghamshire, January 2000.

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1958-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2000			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1999	1989	1997	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
20	352	4	25	24	22	2	5	11	15

Several groups or 'cells' of wintering Surf Scoters are now established in Britain, including in Devon, along the Fife to Aberdeenshire coast, in Moray & Nairn, and in the Western Isles (see fig. 3 – which includes *all* records, not just those thought to be new arrivals). Three records in Kent in 2000 (an immature male at Dungeness on 24th May, one at North Foreland on 21st October and a first-winter at Dungeness on

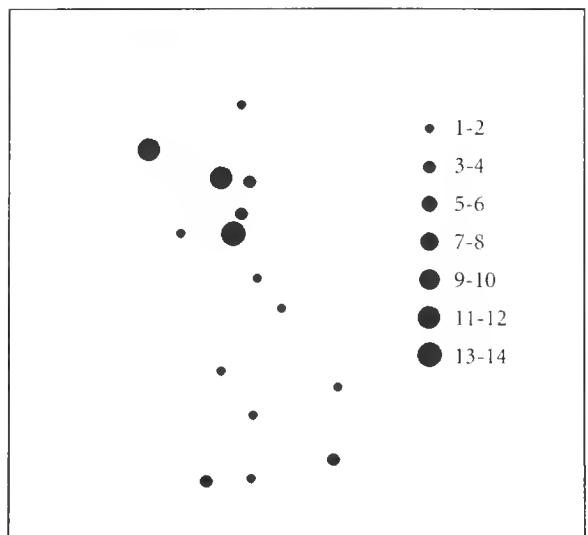


Fig. 3. Distribution of Surf Scoters *Melanitta perspicillata* in Britain in 2000. This includes both newly arrived birds, and long-staying individuals at regular sites. Note the concentrations in Devon, between Fife and Aberdeen, in Moray & Nairn, and in the Western Isles.

13th December), after one in that county in 1999 and records in Sussex in 1998 and 1999, might possibly signal a trend towards increasing numbers wintering in the scoter flocks off southeast England. The data in the table refer solely to presumed new arrivals and the 20 such individuals in 2000 constitute another good year, the fourth-best since 1958, three of which have occurred since 1997. An adult female at Westwood, Worcestershire, on 21st October was a long way from the sea.

European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1986-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-2000			Annual means 1986-1999	
			2000	1999	1993	1986-89	1990-99
1,975	3,450	1	1,975	200	167	60	123

The year 2000 will long be remembered as the most exceptional year in living memory for migrant European Honey-buzzards in Britain, with more than ten times the number recorded in the previous best year, 1999 (note that a substantial number of records of this species in 1999 have come to light since the publication of last year's report, and have been included in these totals). An account of the invasion has already been published (Gantlett & Millington 2000), but this is an ideal opportunity to present updated counts. For example, Gantlett & Millington, writing soon after the event, estimated that around 500 honey-buzzards were seen in September 2000, whereas our data suggest that the total for September and October combined may have been four times that figure. This is despite the fact that we now know that the migrating European Honey-buzzards were accompanied by substantial numbers of Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo*, counts of which may have affected earlier interpretations of the invasion.

The bare facts of the year are thus: 41 migrant European Honey-buzzards were recorded in spring 2000, with a further 29 seen in July and August. The autumn influx began in mid September, with the vast majority (around 80%) of the year's records in the last 10 days of September, and another 15% in the first 10 days of October (fig. 4). At the time of writing, we estimate that a total of 1,975 individuals were seen in 2000, of which all but 70 were in September and October. We acknowledge that this figure could easily be in error by as much as ± 500 , and we are well aware that there are still some counties for which we have not received data. Moreover, and to reiterate the comments we make every year in the introduction to this report, we do not publish records which have not been submitted to, and assessed by, County Recorders and/or records committees, and, consequently, there may be many more unsubstantiated records.

In terms of overall numbers, Sussex stands head and shoulders above the rest, with approximately 680 European Honey-buzzards reported in 2000. In order of importance, the next five counties were:

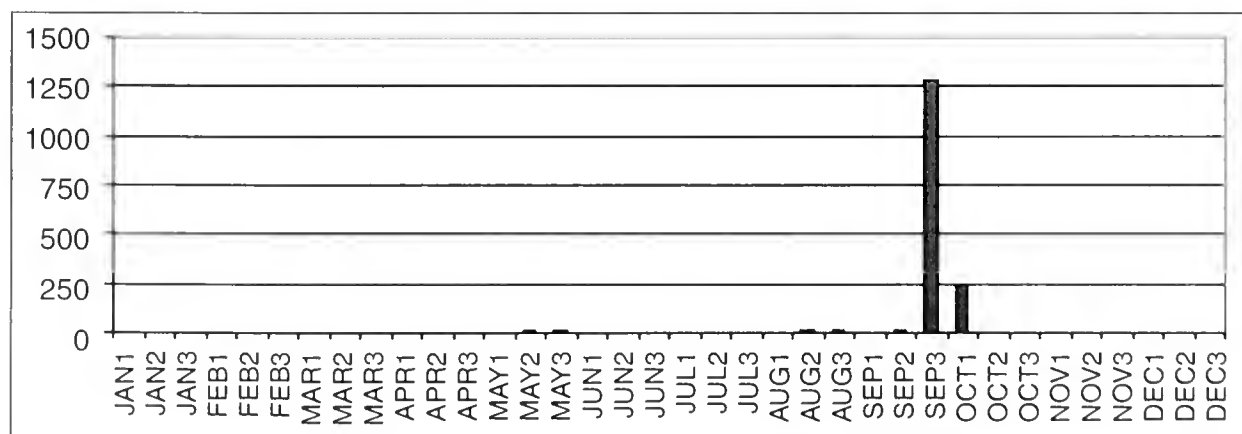


Fig. 4. Numbers of European Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* in Britain in 2000. Note that, for some counties, summary data only were received, so we have exact dates for 1,611 individuals (almost 82% of our estimated annual total of 1,975), of which 1,277 (79.3%) were recorded in the last ten days of September and 240 (14.9%) in the first week of October.

Essex (221), Kent (186), Yorkshire (130), Hampshire (113) and Dorset (101) (fig. 5). We have endeavoured, as far as possible, to eliminate duplication of records within counties, although not between them as this would be an impossible task.

In an attempt to show the regional pattern of the influx, fig. 6 shows daily totals for different areas of Britain, from 17th September to 7th October. These charts show that there were several pulses or waves of migrant honey-buzzards in late September. The first of these was apparent on 20th September, with a substantial arrival (of 68 birds) along the east coast of England, from Cleveland south to the Thames estuary. More arrived on 22nd and, particularly, the 23rd, mostly in Essex and northeast England, but with some appearing in northwest England also. There was a comparative lull on 24th, followed by another peak on 25th, with relatively high numbers in northwest England and Midlands counties, possibly relating to those which had arrived in northern Britain two days earlier or perhaps reflecting new arrivals, while it seems likely that the 59 in southeast England were new in. Fresh arrivals were being logged in the southeast every day,

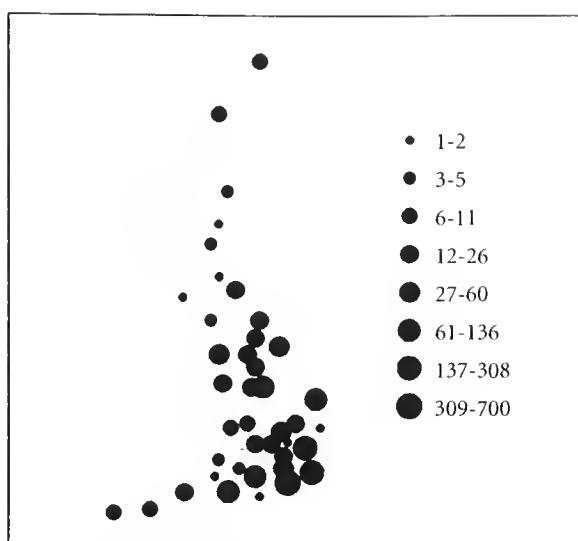


Fig. 5. Distribution of European Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* in Britain in 2000.

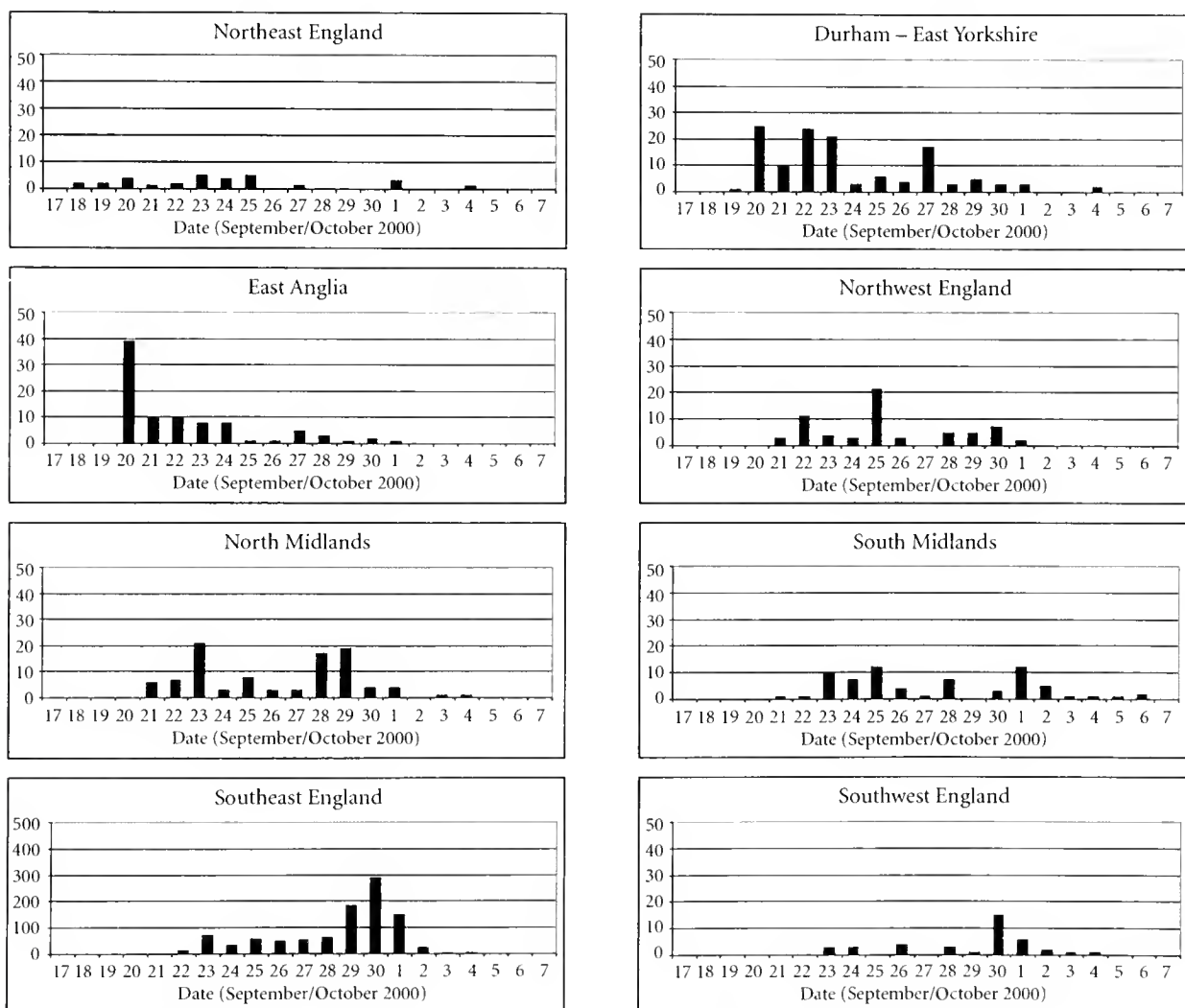


Fig. 6. Daily totals of European Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* in different regions of Britain from 17th September to 7th October 2000. Note that the scale of the graph for southeast England is ten times greater than the others.

while another pulse was picked up along the east coast north of the Humber on 27th, some of which may have been those subsequently seen in the north Midlands on 28th. The major arrival, however, was in southeast England on 29th-30th, mostly between Dorset and Sussex. The numbers seen on these two days were two or three times greater than the previous influxes on 20th, 22nd and 23rd, and 25th.

Many birds were seen at roost sites, either arriving in the evening or leaving in the morning. Assuming that a 'migratory day' might last from 10.00 hrs to 17.00 hrs, and that European Honey-buzzards have an approximate flying speed of 50 km/hr, then distances of up to 350 km could be travelled in a day. Consequently, an individual honey-buzzard could easily pass through Britain in three days, arriving and roosting on day 1, flying throughout day 2 and then departing on day 3. Of course, some of those seen in the south will reflect birds which first arrived in Britain farther north, but the lack of any apparent build-up of migrants prior to the 29th seems to suggest that the large numbers seen in the south on 29th-30th had not simply filtered slowly through the country from the north.

Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1974-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1974-2000			Annual means 1980-1999	
			1994	1998	1988	1980-89	1990-99
19	1,066	17	237	110	85	28	71

George Reszeter



327. Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*, Haxton Down, Wiltshire, January 2000. This wintering individual arrived in 1999, so is not included in the statistics for 2000.

Rough-legged Buzzards were extremely scarce in 2000, with just 19 individuals reported. Eight were logged in Norfolk during the year, with two in Derbyshire, East Yorkshire and Northumberland, and singles in Cumbria, Northeast Scotland, Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles. Presumed new arrivals were fairly evenly spread throughout the first five months of the year, with a peak of four in April, while a tideline corpse was found at Ashkernish, Western Isles on 16th June. In autumn, there were just six reported, between 20th September and 1st December. Since 1974, this species has shown a pattern of occurrence which includes a poor year, such as 2000, every seven or eight years. Could this be associated with the availability of prey on the breeding grounds?

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1986-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-2000			Annual means 1986-1999	
			1995	1989	1988	1986-89	1990-99
69	947	8	117	83	81	72	59

A fairly typical year, both in spring and autumn. Records came from 23 counties or areas, with the highest total of five being recorded in no fewer than six of these: Cheshire, Cleveland, Gloucestershire, Scilly, Sussex and the Western Isles. An early bird was seen on 1st February (at Lower Moors, Scilly), followed by 18 in spring, 10 in midsummer (late June to mid July), and then 4-1 in autumn. The peak spring arrival was in the first 10 days of May (five new birds), while the peak in autumn was in the last 10 days of September (when nine new birds were seen). One on the Isle of May, Fife, on 25th September was, perhaps surprisingly, only the island's second since 1986.



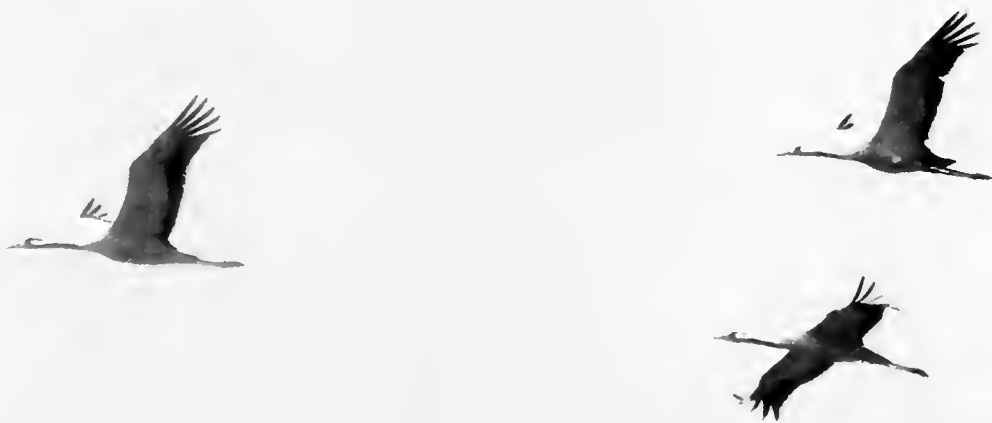
Michael McKee

328. Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*, Eton Wick, Berkshire, October 2000.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1958-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2000			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1963	1982	1985	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
91	1,979	5	685	199	103	64	19	56	38

Excluding the small resident population in Norfolk, 91 migrant Common Cranes were reported in 2000. In particular, the 53 seen in spring (the second-best spring since 1958) helped to make this the second good year in succession for the species in Britain, following 92 in 1999. The majority were seen in the eastern counties of Britain, but one ventured as far west as Cors Fochno, Ceredigion, on 7th April.



Iain Leach

329. Common Cranes *Grus grus*, Spurn, East Yorkshire, May 2000.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1986-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-2000			Annual means 1986-1999		
			1993	1991	1999	1986-89	1990-99	
24	517	12	59	42	41	28	36	

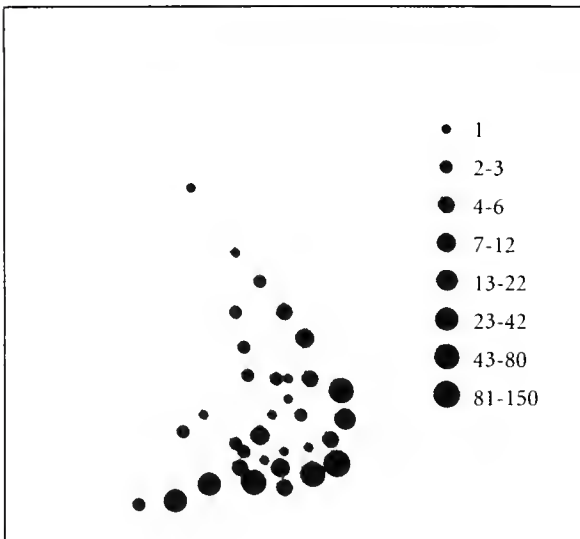


Fig. 7. Distribution of Kentish Plovers *Charadrius alexandrinus* in Britain, 1986-2000.

The year 2000 was a poor one for Kentish Plovers in Britain, with only 24 individuals reported: the third-lowest annual total since 1986. A male on the River Humber, at Spurn, East Yorkshire, on 13th May, was well to the north of other sightings, which were, typically, clustered along the English south coast. The southern bias to records of this species is well demonstrated by fig. 7, which shows all records of Kentish Plovers since 1986. Note that the late submission of many records for 1999, in particular at least 19 in Kent, have pushed the total for that year to 41, the third-highest annual total since 1986 (cf. *Brit. Birds* 94: 570). Records from Kent are included in this year's report.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1968-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2000			Annual means 1968-1999		
			1987	1977	1999	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
111	2,957	7	176	125	122	71	105	95

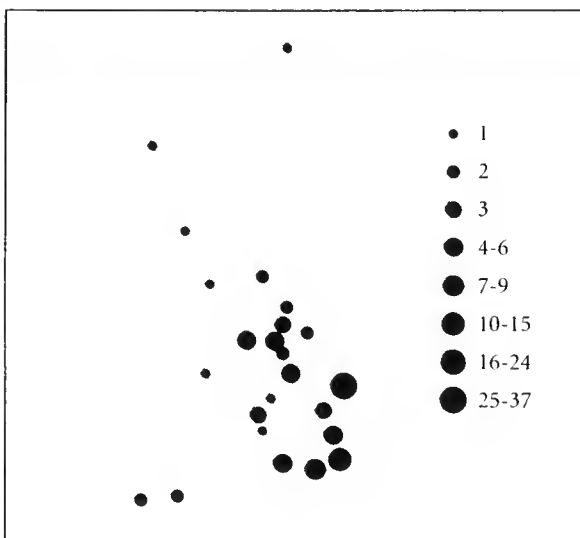


Fig. 8. Distribution of Temminck's Stints *Calidris temminckii* in Britain in 2000.

Eighty-five Temminck's Stints were seen in spring 2000, making this the fifth-best spring since 1968. By contrast, it was a relatively poor autumn, although two in the far north, one on St Kilda, Western Isles, from 29th August to 1st September and one in Shetland on 2nd-9th September, together with two on Tresco, Scilly, on 2nd-5th September and two others in Cornwall in September, were well away from the typical bias towards the east coast of England and the southeast that we have come to expect from this species (fig. 8). Note that, like the previous species, the late inclusion of records for 1999 has significantly increased the overall total for that year, from 94 to 122.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1968-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2000		Annual means 1958-1999		
			1999/1984	1983	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
			80	1,823	5	131	89

Exceptional numbers of Pectoral Sandpipers appeared in spring 2000, with 14 recorded between 28th April and the end of June. This is four more than during spring passage in 1989, the year with the previous highest spring total. The expected late summer influx produced a further 14 in July, including a pair at Pool of Virkie, Shetland, before the main autumn arrival, in September (fig. 9). The best counties in which to see Pectoral Sandpiper in 2000 were Norfolk, where 13 were reported, Cheshire (eight), and Cornwall (seven).

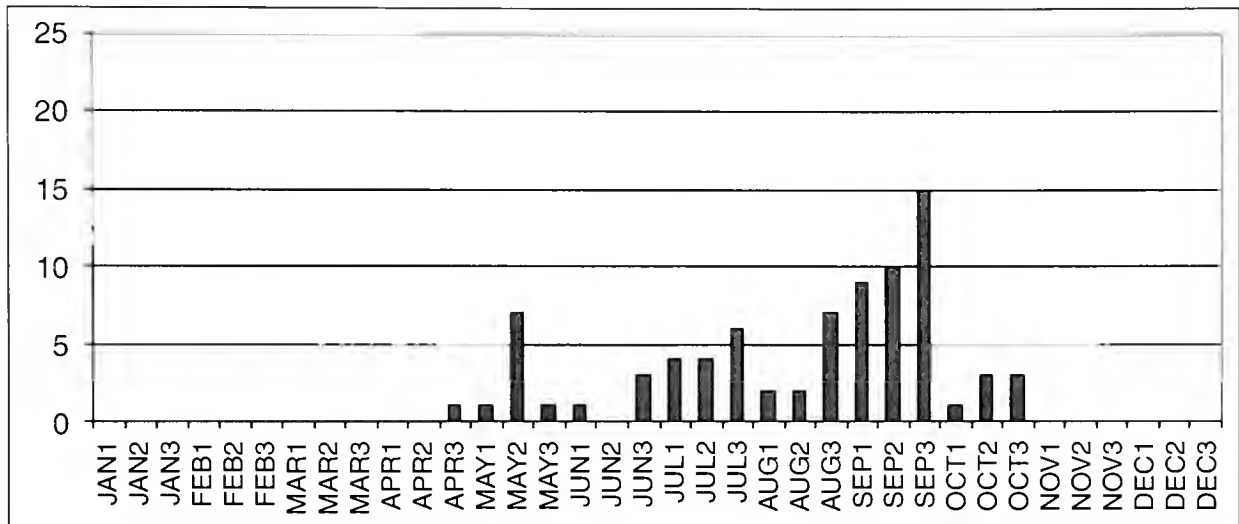


Fig. 9. Numbers of Pectoral Sandpipers *Calidris melanotos* in Britain in 2000.



Jim Pattinson

330. Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*, Hauxley, Northumberland, July 2000.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1958-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2000			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1977	1975	1996	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
			32	601	4	54	48	34	3

The 32 Buff-breasted Sandpipers seen in 2000 constitute one of the best recent years for this species (fig. 10). There was one spring record, the first since 1997, on Fetlar, Shetland, on 30th May. As usual, most of the autumn birds appeared in the west, and the peak county totals were seven in Cornwall, six on Scilly and five in the Western Isles. One at a caravan park at Bracklesham, West Sussex, from 23rd September to 4th October, was one of the more unexpected records of the autumn.

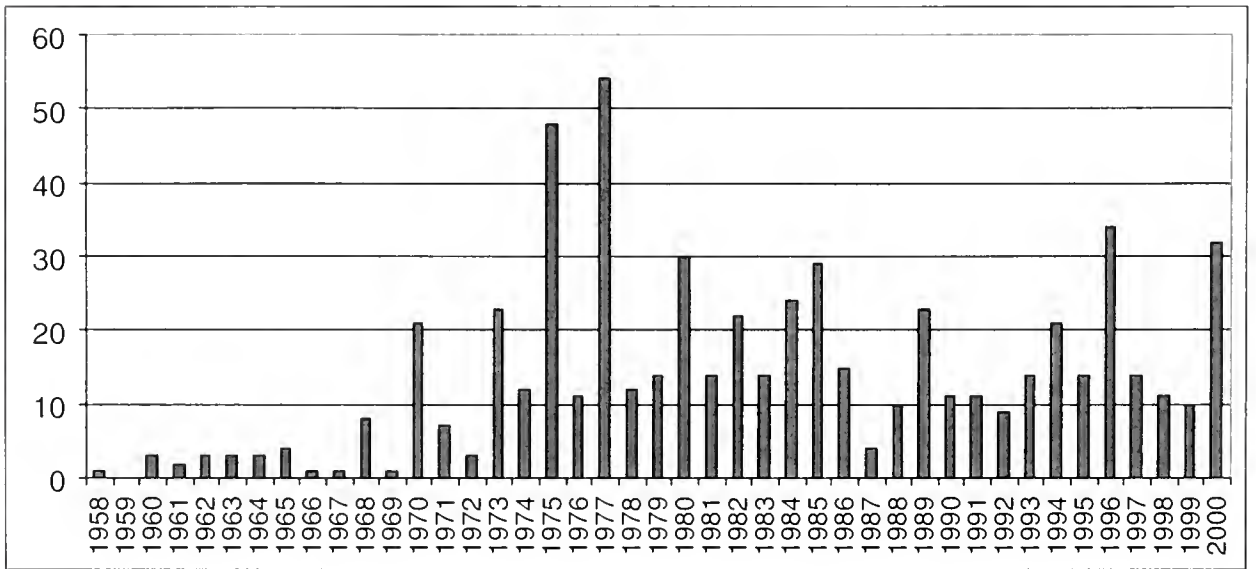


Fig. 10. Numbers of Buff-breasted Sandpipers *Tryngites subruficollis* in Britain, 1958-2000.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1986-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-2000			Annual means 1986-1999	
			1999	1989	1992	1986-89	1990-99
			23	505	13	69	46

Following the record year of 1999, just 23 migrant Red-necked Phalaropes were reported in 2000, the third-lowest total since these counts began, in 1986. Typically, most were seen in eastern coastal counties, with five each for East Yorkshire and Norfolk, although both the first of the year (at Kingsbury Water Park, Warwickshire, on 24th April) and the last (on the Ogmere Estuary, Glamorgan, on 12th November) were well to the west.

Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1986-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-2000			Annual means 1986-1999	
			1989	1987	1988	1986-89	1990-99
			154	2,949	8	366	365

In an otherwise unexceptional year for Grey Phalaropes, there were some interesting inland records of this species in 2000. These included singles at Horbury, Wyke, West Yorkshire, on 6th July; Westwood, Worcestershire on 10th-11th October; Battlefield, Shropshire, on 18th October; the Ouse Washes, Cambridgeshire, on 23rd October; and Membury, Wiltshire, on 7th December. Fig. 11 highlights the typical cluster of records in southern coastal parts of Britain, particularly the southwest; no fewer than 72 (47%) were reported in Cornwall. The Western Isles, where 12 were seen, was the only area away from southern England with more than 10 records.

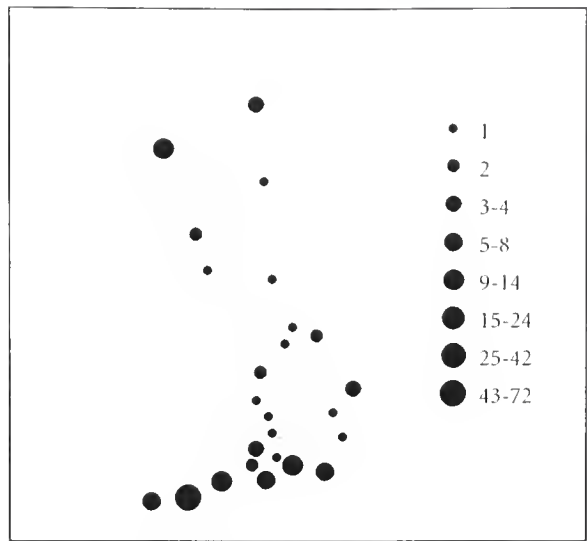


Fig. 11. Distribution of Grey Phalaropes *Phalaropus fulicarius* in Britain in 2000.

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1968-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2000			Annual means 1968-1999		
			1987	1997	1988	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
94	4,180	15	710	396	346	51	203	141

Two first-summer Sabine's Gulls were seen in late spring in 2000, one at Breydon Water, Norfolk, on 1st May, with another south past Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, on 15th June. All other records were in autumn, including 20 in Cornwall, 14 in the Western Isles and nine in East Yorkshire. Those away from the more usual southwest coastal haunts included four in Sussex, four in the Thames Estuary, and one at sea, 150 km WNW of Foula, Shetland.



John Harriman

331. Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*, Saltburn, Cleveland, November 2000.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1970-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1970-2000			Annual means 1970-1999		
			1992	1990	1997	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
41	1,315	18	108	94	88	4	47	76

The number of newly arrived Ring-billed Gulls in Britain has declined sharply since 1998, with fewer in both 1999 and 2000 than in any other year since 1981 (fig. 12). There were 16 new birds in Cornwall, nine in Devon and three in Dorset, Gloucestershire, Lancashire and North Merseyside. East-coast records are still unusual and included two in Essex, two in Yorkshire, one in Northumberland and one in Northeast Scotland. Returning birds, which are excluded from these totals, included one at Stromness, Orkney, appearing for its 13th winter.

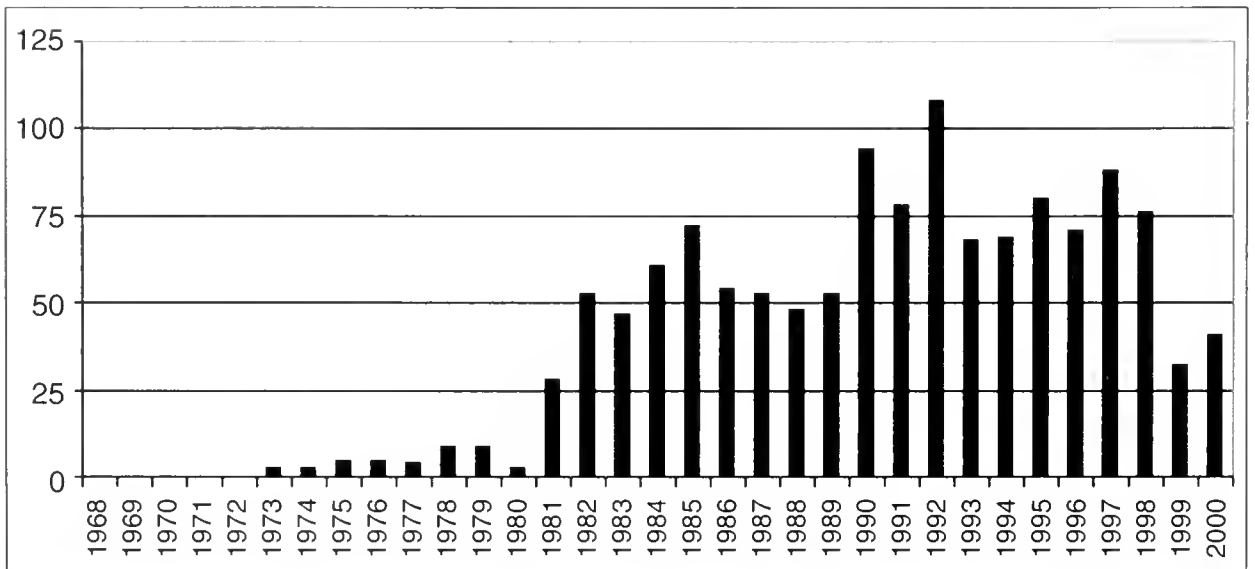


Fig. 12. Numbers of Ring-billed Gulls *Larus delawarensis* in Britain, 1968-2000.



Iain Leach

332. Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Par Beach, Cornwall, March 2000.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1958-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2000			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1997	1990	1995	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
15	710	16	132	71	39	4	6	20	38

Although the number of European Bee-eaters seen in 2000 was below average for the previous two decades, the data show a fairly typical spread of records, including four singles in Sussex and a group of four (the largest recorded) at Burgh Castle, Norfolk, on 10th-11th May. There was just one record in Scotland, at Craigmill, Angus & Dundee, on 27th June, and only one autumn record, at Beachy Head, Sussex, on 27th August.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1968-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2000			Annual means 1968-1999		
			1968	1980	1977	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
45	3,973	33	218	188	178	118	133	118

Although there may be some records still to come, 2000 was, by a considerable margin, the worst year for Hoopoes in Britain since 1968, the previous low being 64 in 1970 (fig. 13). Six of those seen in 2000 were in Scilly, while four were reported in each of four other counties: Hampshire, Kent, Somerset and Sussex. Of the seven records in September and October, four were in Scotland, the latest for the year being at Kinloch Rannoch, Fife, on 25th October.

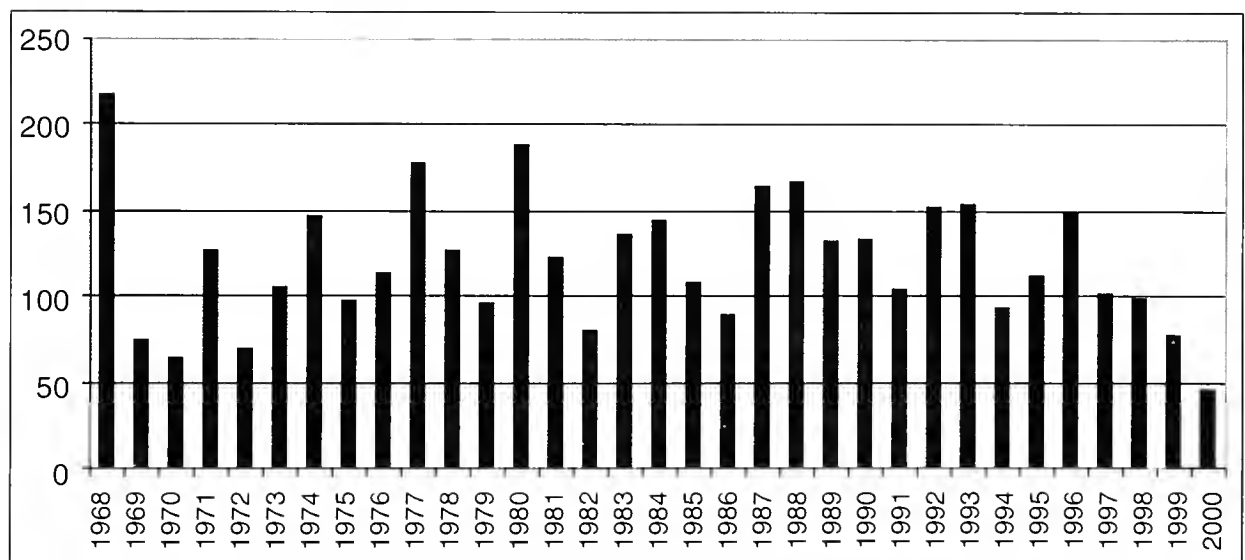


Fig. 13. Numbers of Hoopoes *Upupa epops* in Britain, 1968-2000.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1986-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-2000			Annual means 1986-1999	
			1998	1987	1988	1986-89	1990-99
264	4,064	11	407	354	314	311	256

Tony Collinson



333. Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, Ripon, North Yorkshire, April 2000 (see p. 619).

Wrynecks were extremely scarce in spring 2000, and just 28 were reported. By contrast, autumn migration was slightly better than average, with reports received of 236 individuals. The timing of records and their distribution was typical, being concentrated along the east and south coasts of Britain.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1958-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2000			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1996	1994	1999	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
26	590	7	45	39	31	5	11	13	27

There have been more Short-toed Larks recorded in every year since 1993 (when this species was removed from the BBRC list) than in any of the preceding 35 years. Although 2000 was not one of the best years, this trend was maintained, with 10 in spring, one in midsummer (on St Agnes, Scilly, from 18th July) and 15 in autumn. The importance of Scilly and the Northern Isles for records of Short-toed Lark is graphically illustrated by fig. 14. Nine Short-toed Larks were seen away from Scilly and the Northern Isles in 2000, as follows:

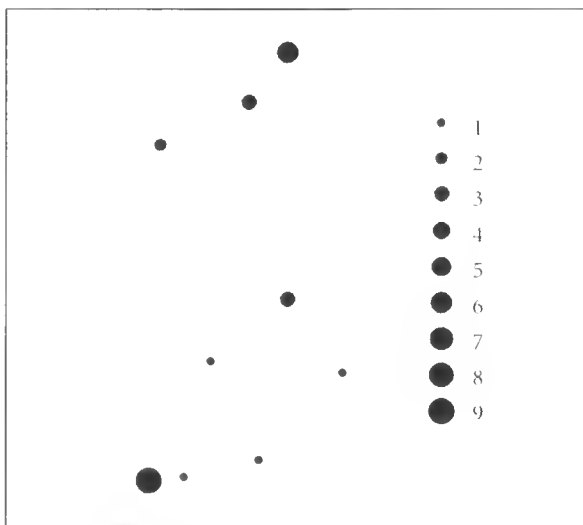


Fig. 14. Distribution of Short toed Larks *Calandrella brachydactyla* in Britain in 2000.

one at South Gare, Cleveland, from 30th April to 5th May, with a second on 14th-15th May and a third on 15th May also; one at Portland, Dorset, on 3rd May; one at Breydon Water, Norfolk, on 6th May; one at Conwy RSPB Reserve, Caernarfonshire, on 12th-13th May; one at Reskajeage, Cornwall, on 18th-19th October and finally two in the Western Isles, one at West Gerinish, North Uist, on 1st October and another on St Kilda on 21st October. The last two mean that the number of records in that area since 1958 was doubled in a single year.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1958-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2000			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1994	1995	1988	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
85	2,940	15	342	157	144	34	51	65	128

Eight Richard's Pipits were recorded in spring 2000, between 18th April and 4th May, making this the fourth-best spring for the species since 1958. Of these, five were in Norfolk, with singles in Cornwall, Northumberland and Sussex. Prior to 1989, spring records were exceptional, with a mean of just 1.1 per year between 1958 and 1988, but the comparable figure between 1989 and 2000 was 6.8. The number and pattern of autumn migrants fell within the established trend, with no unusual records reported. Wintering birds remain unusual, however, so three January records, singles in Cornwall, Dorset and Orkney, are noteworthy. The Orkney bird, on Papa Westray on 20th January, is the first documented arrival in the Northern Isles in the early part of the year.



Alan Tate

334. Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*, Lowestoft, Suffolk, September 2000.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1958-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2000			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1992	1983	1977	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
20	1,088	27	57	56	45	13	27	36	29

The year 2000 was another poor one for Tawny Pipits in Britain, with just nine in spring and 11 in autumn, which continues the pattern established during the mid 1990s. Apart from one on Scilly, all spring migrants were on the east coast of England, between Sandwich Bay, Kent, and Boulby, Cleveland, while all those in autumn were on the south and east coasts, with one at Stiffkey, Norfolk, on 26th September being the farthest north.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1968-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2000			Annual means 1968-1999		
			1985	1981	1987	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
72	4,239	22	622	333	251	98	186	113

Below-average numbers of Bluethroats were reported in Britain in 2000. Only 43 appeared in spring, compared with the spring mean of 95. Numbers in autumn were, proportionately, a little better, although 29 individuals is still below the seasonal mean of 33 since 1968. Nevertheless, there were some interesting individual records. A male trapped at Filey, North Yorkshire, on 5th May, was later recovered on a fishing boat off the Norwegian coast. The penultimate record of the year, on North Ronaldsay,

Orkney, on 4th November, was of the white-spotted form *L. s. cyaneula*. This, the only 'White-spotted Bluethroat' in 2000, was just the third record of *L. s. cyaneula* for Orkney, and the second-latest of this form in Britain since 1968, the latest being at Grafham Water, Cambridgeshire, on 5th November 1988. Fig. 15 shows the annual totals of *L. s. cyaneula* in Britain since 1968.

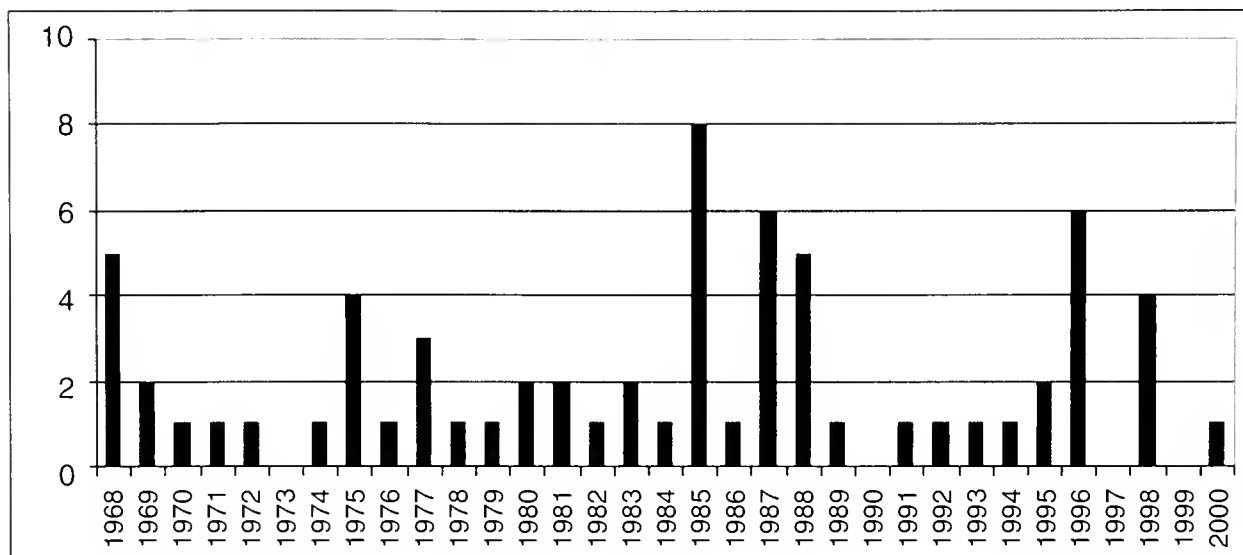


Fig. 15. Numbers of Bluethroats *Luscinia svecica* of the white-spotted form *cyaneula* in Britain, 1968-2000.

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1958-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2000			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1976	1991	1972	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
14	1,175	29	102	62	61	10	40	23	42

The 14 Aquatic Warblers reported in 2000 constitute the equal-lowest British total since 1978 (fig. 16). With the exception of two in Sussex, all were in southwest England or southwest Wales between 5th August and 22nd September.

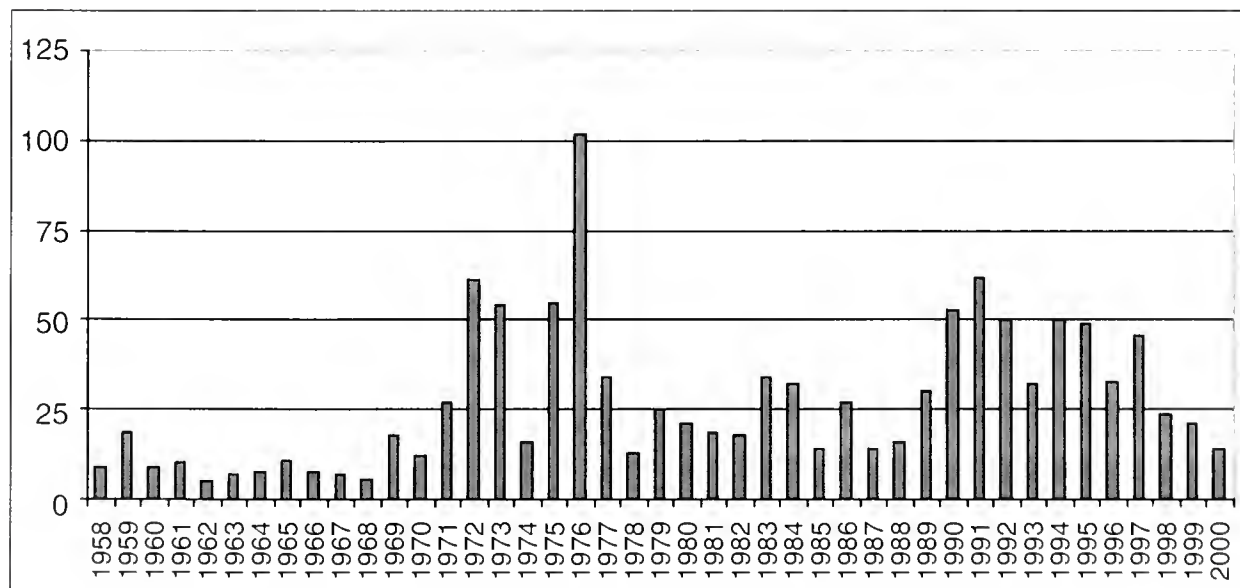


Fig. 16. Numbers of Aquatic Warblers *Acrocephalus paludicola* in Britain, 1958-2000.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1986-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-2000			Annual means 1986-1999	
			1992	1996	1997	1986-89	1990-99
43	670	8	103	58	57	30	50

The year 2000 was a fairly typical one for Marsh Warblers in Britain, with the majority reported in spring. Of the 11 seen in autumn, none was south of Northumberland. Of these, four were in Orkney, three were on Fair Isle, Shetland, three were in Northumberland (including two which both arrived on 8th November, at Marsden Quarry and Prior's Park), with the remaining one on St Kilda, Western Isles, on 18th-19th September. Since 1986, there has only been one record later than the two in Northumberland: on 13th November 1995, at Nanquidno, Cornwall.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1968-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2000			Annual means 1968-1999		
			1997	1992	1995	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
43	3,408	33	286	277	173	79	104	138

We have annual data for Icterine Warbler stretching back to 1968, and the total of 43 seen in 2000 was the lowest on record (fig. 17). The nine spring records were all in the Northern Isles, between 20th and 29th May. Of the 34 autumn migrants, there was a marked arrival (of 14) during 19th-22nd September. There was just one inland record, at Unstead sewage farm, Surrey, on 17th August.

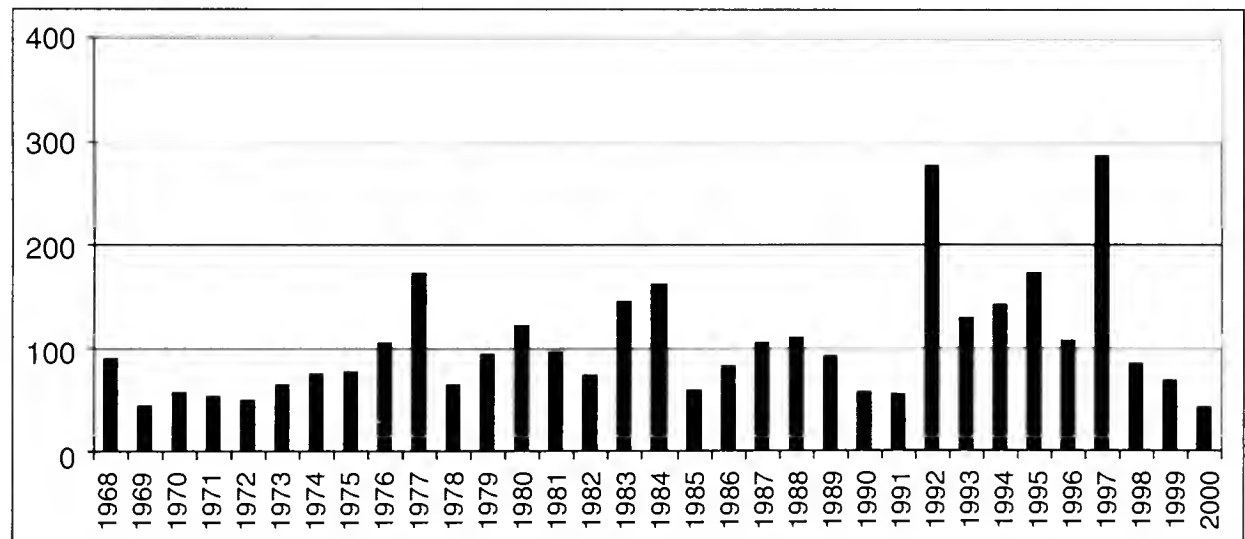


Fig. 17. Numbers of Icterine Warblers *Hippolais icterina* in Britain, 1968-2000.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1968-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2000			Annual means 1968-1999		
			1981	1996	1983	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
21	1,058	27	60	59	54	29	39	30

For the fourth year in a row, comparatively few Melodious Warblers were seen, and the total for 2000 is

once again well below the mean for the previous decade. Dorset had the most records, with five, while there were two in Cornwall, Devon, Kent, Pembrokeshire and Scilly. The first for Warwickshire, at Brandon Marsh on 3rd June, was particularly noteworthy, as was one in Regent's Park, London, on 23rd August, and two late individuals in the far north, on Holm, Orkney, on 29th September, and on South Uist, Western Isles, on 6th October. The two remaining records were on Bardsey, Gwynedd, on 8th June and at Spurn, East Yorkshire, on 31st May.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1968-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2000			Annual means 1968-1999		
			1994	1997	1996	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
96	4,468	27	231	219	202	144	108	157

There have been just seven years since 1968 in which fewer than 100 Barred Warblers have been recorded in Britain and, consequently, the 96 in 2000 make this a relatively poor year. There were no spring records and, with the exception of singles in Cheshire and the Western Isles, all autumn migrants were seen on the south and east coasts.

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1958-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2000			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1997	1994	1996	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
62	1,394	7	171	153	142	3	9	39	82

There have now been more than 50 Pallas's Leaf Warblers recorded every year since 1994. In 2000, the majority fitted into the well-established pattern of timing and distribution, i.e. with the main arrival period being in late October/early November, predominantly along the east and south coasts. In 2000, 43 of the 62 individuals were recorded in November (fig. 18), although Norfolk recorded its earliest ever, with two at Scolt Head on 1st October. Notable exceptions to this pattern included singles in Cumbria and Somerset, and a winter record at Bosherton, Pembrokeshire, on 19th-20th January. Most exceptional though, was Britain's second-ever spring bird, a singing male at Hauxley, Northumberland, on 11th May. The only previous spring record was at Sandwich Bay, Kent, on 15th April 1975.

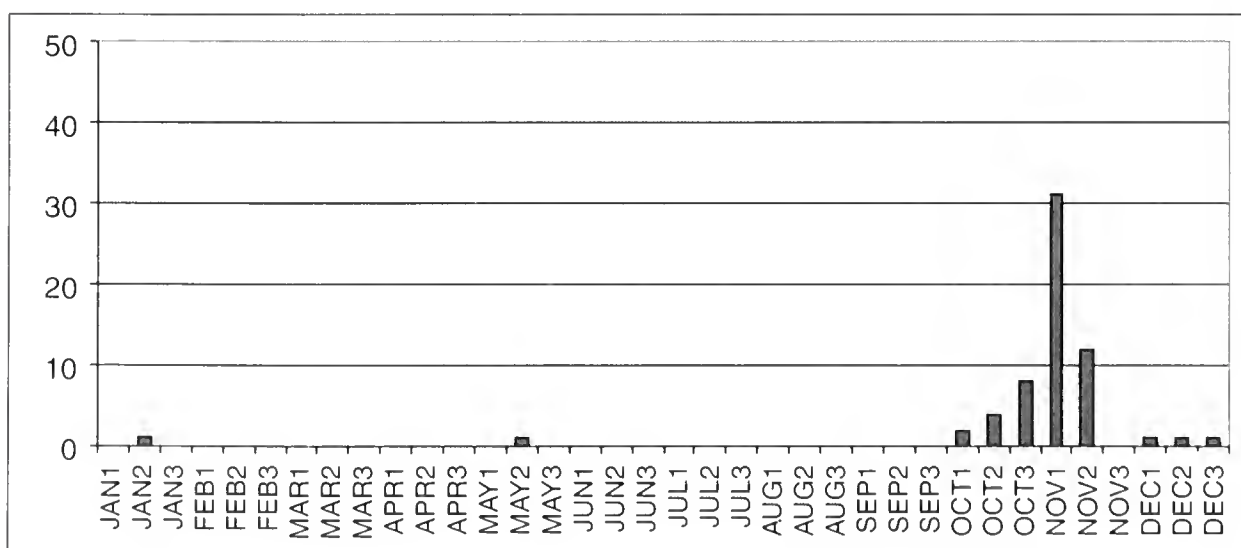


Fig. 18. Numbers of Pallas's Leaf Warblers *Phylloscopus proregulus* in Britain in 2000.



Gary Bellingham

335. Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*, Filey, East Yorkshire, November 2000.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1968-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2000			Annual means 1968-1999		
			1988	1985	1986	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
287	7,589	12	739	542	498	72	320	324

Once again, good numbers of Yellow-browed Warblers appeared in Britain in 2000, continuing the pattern set in the mid 1980s (see *Brit. Birds* 93: 631), although numbers in 2000 were slightly below the average for the past two decades. All but one (at Helston, Cornwall, in March) were in autumn, though with a distinctly earlier arrival pattern than Pallas's Leaf Warblers (compare fig. 18 with fig. 19).

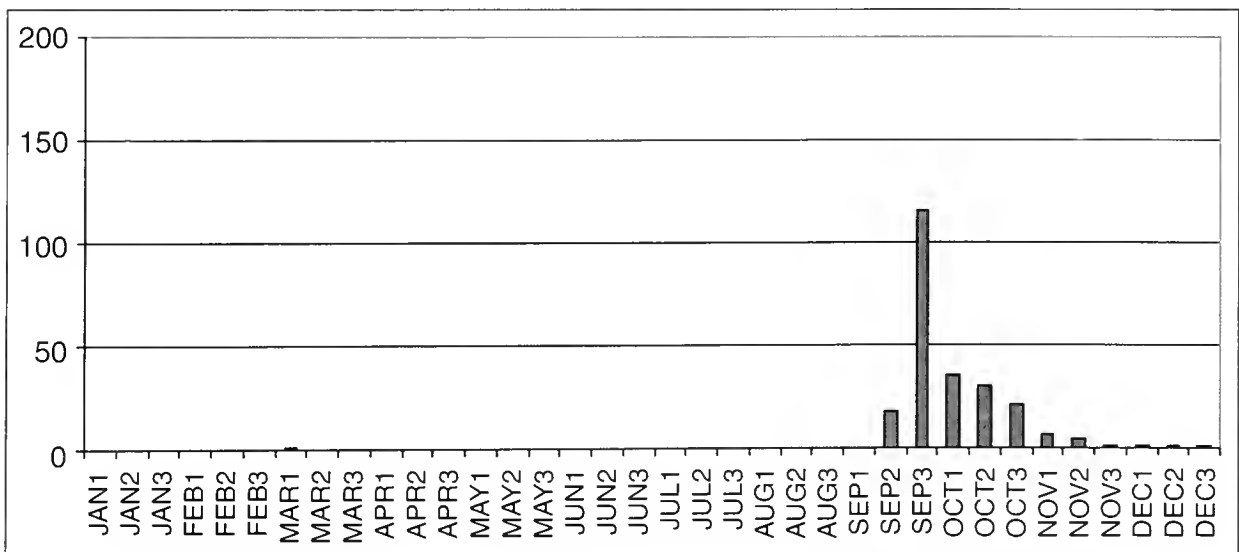


Fig. 19. Numbers of Yellow-browed Warblers *Phylloscopus inornatus* in Britain in 2000.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1968-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2000			Annual means 1968-1999		
			1984	1976	1989	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
69	2,980	26	196	174	128	75	115	86

The year 2000 was another comparatively poor one for Red-breasted Flycatchers, lacking any unseasonal or unexpected records. This species continues to be significantly less common than it was in the 1980s. There were just four spring records: two in East Yorkshire, on 27th April and 10th May, and two at South Gare, Cleveland, on 5th June.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1968-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2000			Annual means 1968-1999		
			1994	1992	1997	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
100	2,840	10	232	184	157	48	84	132

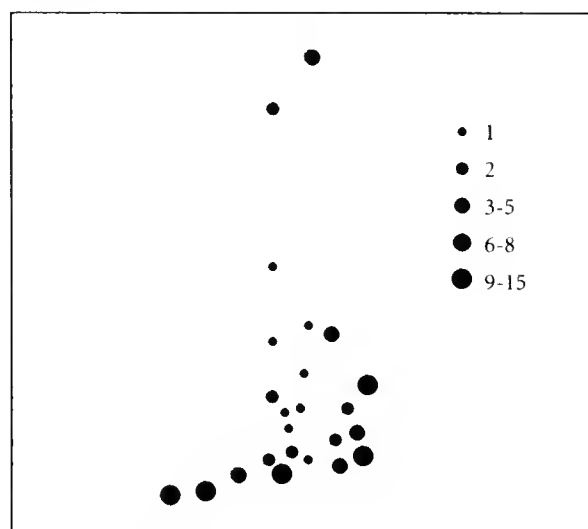


Fig. 20. Distribution of migrant Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* in Britain in 2000.

Although the total of 100 Golden Orioles seen in 2000 was well below the annual mean for the 1990s, this was still a pretty good year. Almost all birds were seen in spring, and just one migrant was seen after July, at Waterbeach Fen, Cambridgeshire, on 10th August. There were three inland records farther north than usual, with one at Pools Brook, Derbyshire, on 25th June, and two in Shropshire, at Poles Coppice on 26th May and Leebotwood on 19th June. Fig. 20 shows the distribution of migrant Golden Orioles in Britain in 2000, and the typical concentration along the south coast of England.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1986-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-2000			Annual means 1986-1999	
			1988	1998	1992	1986-89	1990-99
183	3,487	10	423	371	364	255	228

The 183 Red-backed Shrikes seen in 2000 marks a welcome comeback from the desperately low total (of 98) reported in 1999, but this number is still well below the annual average since 1986. Fig. 21 shows the numbers seen in spring and autumn, and the main arrival times. There were records from 24 counties or areas, with the highest totals in Shetland (approximately 55), East Yorkshire (21), Norfolk (16) and Orkney (12).

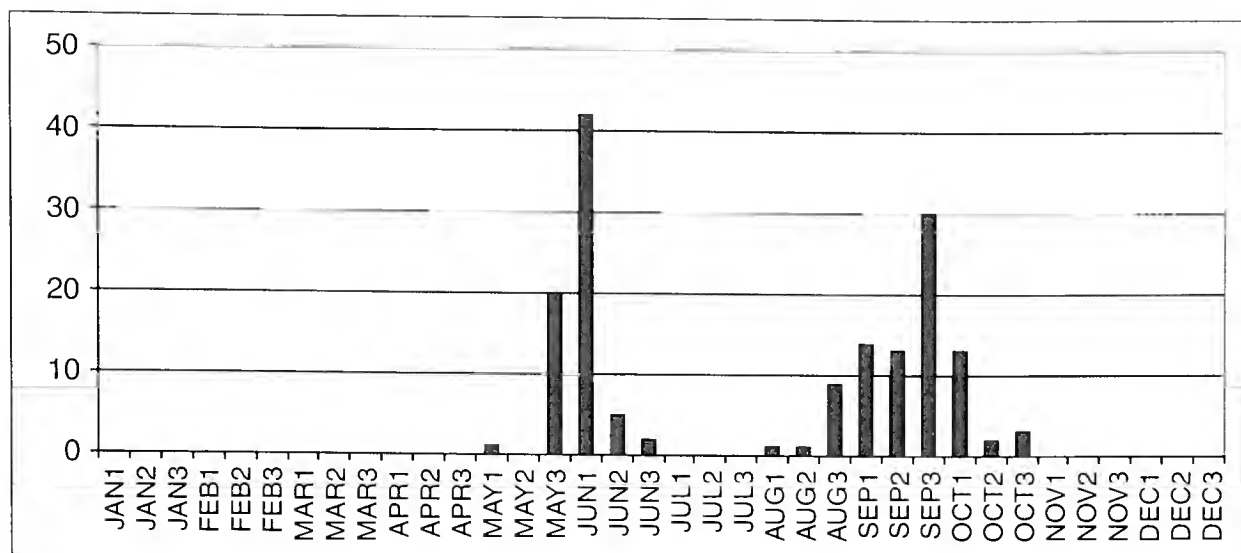


Fig. 21. Numbers of Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* in Britain in 2000.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1986-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-2000		Annual means 1986-1999	
			1998	1991/1990	1986-89	1990-99
64	1,847	13	234	160	131	126

With just 64 new arrivals, 2000 ranks as the second-worst year for Great Grey Shrikes in Britain since 1986. In addition to the 64 shown in the table, a further 12 have been excluded from the statistics because they represent birds either known to be returning to regular wintering sites, or which had been present since 1999. The numbers arriving in autumn 2000 were exceptionally low, with just 21 recorded between September and November. In the year as a whole, the eight seen in Shetland composed the highest total for any recording area, while up to six may have wintered in Sussex.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1958-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2000			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1997	1995	1988	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
17	655	16	36	27	26	12	13	16	21

A fairly typical year, with the annual total a little below the mean for the past decade. Ten were reported in spring and seven in autumn, all of these to the south of a line from the Mersey to the Wash. Most were in the southwest, with five in Scilly and three in Cornwall; farther east there were singles in Devon, Dorset and Kent, and two in both Norfolk and Sussex. There were also two in Wales, singles on Skomer, Dyfed, on 29th April, and on Bardsey, Gwynedd, on 1st-4th May.

European Serin *Serinus serinus*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1958-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2000			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1996	1994	1997	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
58	1,400	9	99	81	75	8	19	37	68

The 58 European Serins seen in Britain in 2000 represent a further consolidation of this species' recent increase in numbers. Although the total is below the annual mean for the 1990s, more were recorded in 2000 than in any year prior to 1990 (fig. 22). Occurrences were largely confined to the south coast of England, with only five recorded farther north, the most northerly being at Red Rocks, Cheshire, on 7th May and Spurn, East Yorkshire, on 14th May.

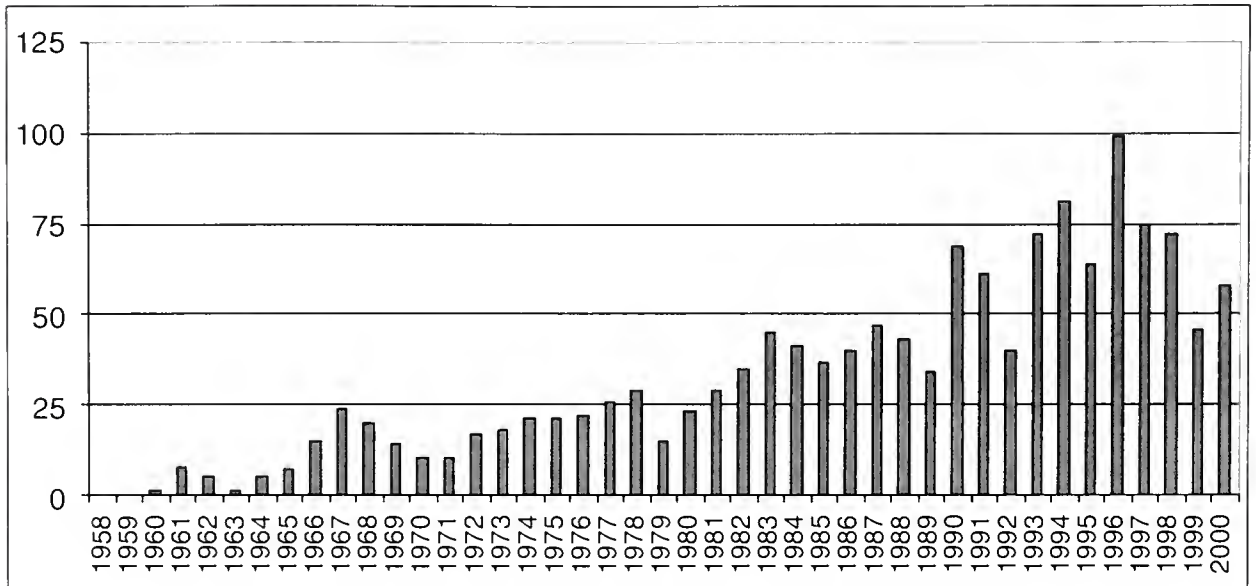


Fig. 22. Numbers of European Serins *Serinus serinus* in Britain, 1958-2000.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1958-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2000			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1992	1995	2000	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
171	2,894	3	244	180	171	10	37	76	147

The year 2000 proved to be the third-best year since 1958 for Common Rosefinches, even though numbers in spring were exceptionally low: 16 individuals is the lowest total recorded since 1980. It will be interesting to see whether the autumn influx, by far the largest ever recorded in Britain, contained

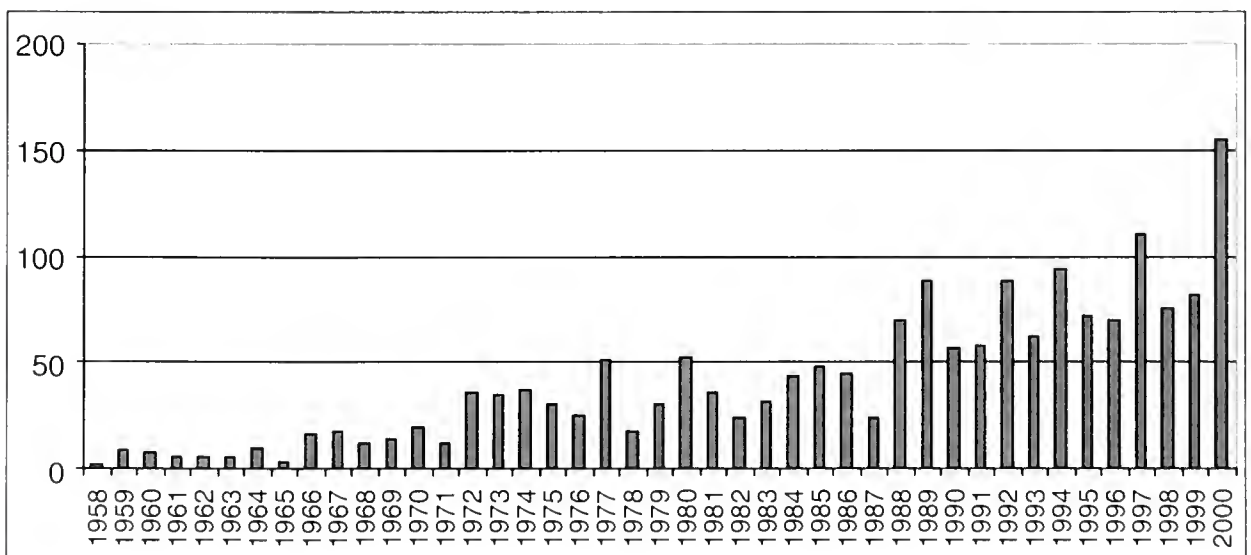


Fig. 23. Numbers of Common Rosefinches *Carpodacus erythrinus* in Britain in autumn (August-November), 1958-2000.

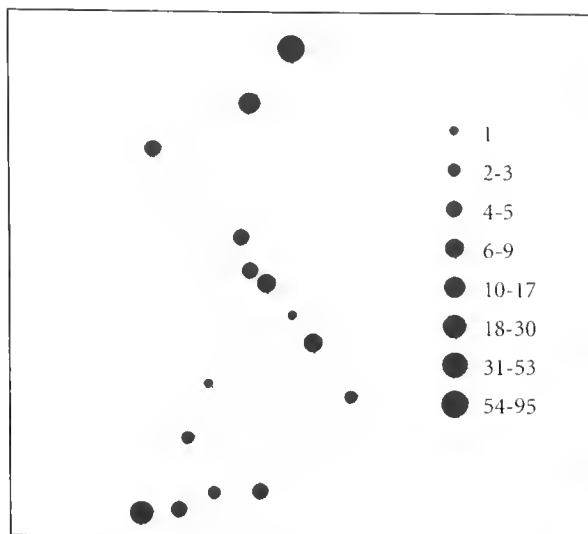


Fig. 24. Distribution of Common Rosefinches *Carpodacus erythrinus* in Britain in 2000.



Gary Bellingham

336. Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*, Fair Isle, Shetland, September 2000.

the next wave of colonists to Britain (fig. 23). In autumn, no fewer than 95 (61% of the seasonal total) occurred on Shetland, including one on Fair Isle on 5th November, only the tenth record in that month since 1958 (fig. 24).

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1968-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-2000			Annual means 1968-1999		
			1996	1969	1995	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
40	1,959	26	118	114	89	53	58	71

Relatively few Ortolan Buntings were seen in Britain in 2000, the second year in succession which has been well below average. Nine were recorded in Scilly, the top recording area, with six in Norfolk and five in Shetland. Just eight were seen in spring, which is about half the mean figure for this season since 1968. Relatively more (32) were seen in autumn, although, again, this is below the seasonal mean of 43. Looking at the annual totals since 1968, there is some evidence of a cyclical pattern of abundance, with a low point every nine or ten years (fig. 24). Two of the spring records were inland: at QEII Reservoir, London, on 3rd May and Aston-on-Trent, Derbyshire, on 6th May.

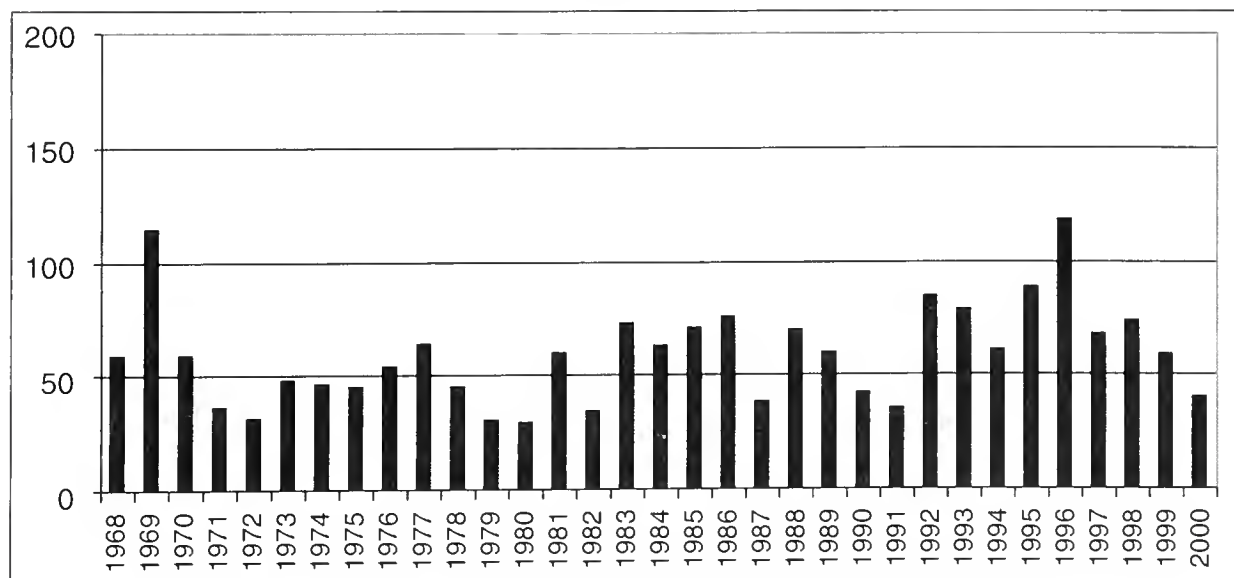


Fig. 25. Numbers of Ortolan Buntings *Emberiza hortulana* in Britain, 1968-2000.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*

Number of individuals in 2000	Number of individuals in 1958-2000	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-2000			Annual means 1958-1999			
			2000	1987	1993	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
58	751	1	58	47	46	5	10	24	29



Michael McKee

337. Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*, Out Skerries, Shetland, September 2000.

Although there were no spring records in 2000, an extraordinary total of at least 56 Little Buntings appeared in the autumn, comfortably surpassing the previous record total, of 47 in 1987. The vast majority were in the Northern Isles, with no fewer than 41 in Shetland (including 13 on Fair Isle alone) between 12th September and 1st November, and a further five on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, between 14th September and 2nd October. The last 10 days of September was the peak period in Shetland, with no fewer than 16 seen on 23rd September. Elsewhere, there were five on the Farne Islands, Northumberland, between 2nd September and 6th November, and singles in Cleveland, Devon, East Yorkshire, Fife, and the Western Isles. In addition, there were two winter records, at Shepley, West Yorkshire (from 15th January), and Stubbington, Hampshire (from 15th February), the latter representing only the third record for that county.

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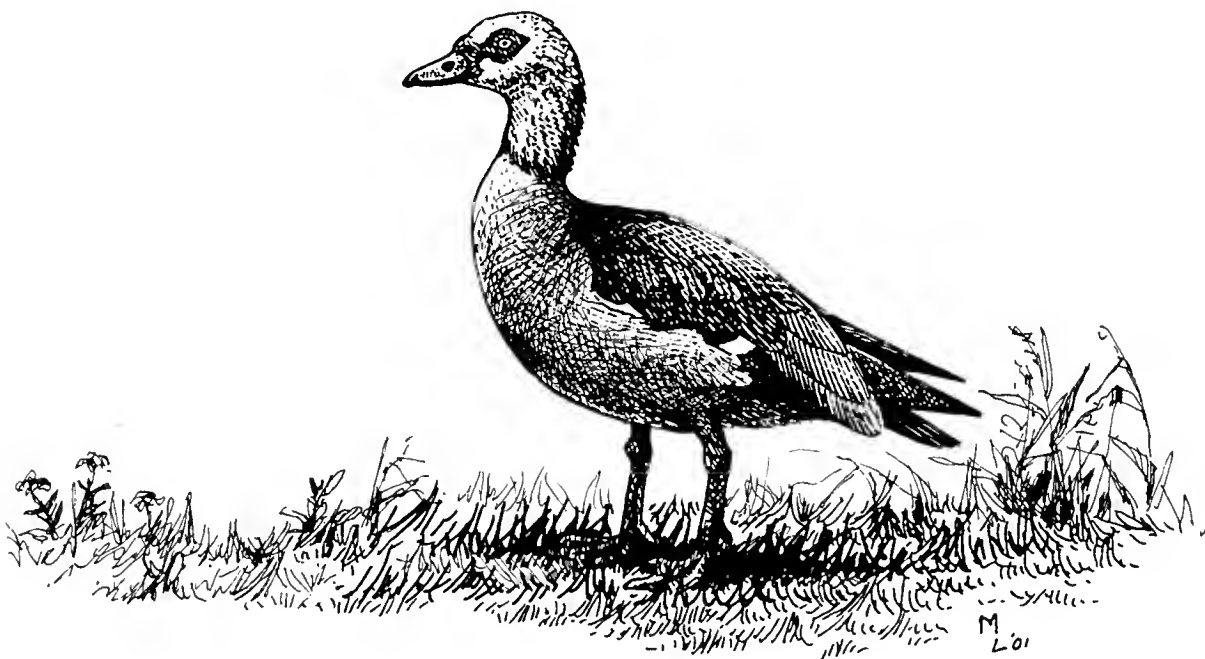
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The production of this report depends in no small part upon the goodwill of the county and regional recorders who provide us with data. In order to make the report as complete as possible, we would be most grateful for a copy of your county or regional report (sent to Mike Rogers at the above address) or data for the relevant species e-mailed to Peter Fraser at pafrazer@dial.pipex.com. The deadline for submission of 2001 data is 31st May 2003.

Non-native birds breeding in the United Kingdom in 2000

Malcolm Ogilvie and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel



Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*
Mike Langman

This is the fifth annual report by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel into the breeding of the rarer non-native species in the United Kingdom, and covers the year 2000. Compared with the previous report, the recording of some species has improved but it is clear that many observers still do not bother to document the occurrence of 'escapes', despite the fact that the majority of county bird reports now include a section devoted to them. The Panel continues to urge all observers to contribute records to their County Recorder and, through them, to the Panel.

Records of all non-native species involving

breeding or potential breeding activity in 2000 are listed below. Pairs or, for some species such as the pheasants (Phasianidae), just males in suitable habitat qualify for inclusion. The letter codes after the species' names are the categories used by the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (BOURC 1998). The absence of a letter indicates that the species is not currently listed.

A Species which have been recorded in an apparently natural state at least once since 1st January 1950.

B Species which were recorded in an appar-

ently natural state at least once up to 31st December 1949, but have not been recorded subsequently.

- C Species that, although originally introduced by Man, either deliberately or accidentally, have established breeding populations derived from introduced stock, that maintain themselves without necessary recourse to further introduction.
- E Species that have been recorded as introductions, transportees or escapees from captivity, and whose breeding populations (if any) are thought not to be self-sustaining. These are marked E* when they have been recorded as nesting with their own kind.

The following species, shown as Category C in the British List, are dealt with in the Panel's reports on rare breeding birds (Ogilvie *et al.* 2002): Gadwall *Anas strepera*, Red Kite *Milvus*

milvus and Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*.

The Panel does not gather information for the following relatively common species of which introduced or escaped populations breed in the wild (categories in brackets): Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* (AC), Greylag Goose *Anser anser* (AC), Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* (AC), Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* (C), Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* (AC), Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* (C), Chukar Partridge *Alectoris chukar* (E*), Red-legged Partridge *A. rufa* (C), Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* (C), Rock Dove (and Feral Pigeon) *Columbia livia* (AC), and Little Owl *Athene noctua* (C).

Records are set out in the country order England, Wales, Scotland, and, within those, by alphabetical order of county. There were no records of scarcer non-native species breeding in Northern Ireland in 2000.

Systematic list

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (AE*)

Two localities in two counties: two populations of full-winged individuals.

NORFOLK The breeding colony containing full-winged birds at Great Witchingham Park was not counted this year. LOTHIAN No count was received of the Edinburgh Zoo population.

It is understood that no young were allowed to become full-winged at Edinburgh Zoo this year, in line with the policy of reducing the number of free-flying birds.

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus* (E*)

At least seven localities in seven counties: four pairs bred, three other pairs reported.

CLEVELAND Pair bred at Stewart Park and reared two young. DEVON Pair bred at Dawlish Warren and hatched three young. GREATER MANCHESTER Pair bred at Arley Hall and reared two young, one of which was shot; the other was taken into care and re-homed. NORFOLK Pair seen at various localities along the north coast during the year, but did not breed. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Pair possibly bred at Deene Lake where one of three adults present was sitting on a nest in September. SUSSEX Pair with one full-grown cygnet, Arlington Reservoir, August to October; breeding locality unknown. WARWICKSHIRE Pair summered in the Tame valley.

No breeding reports were received from either Wiltshire or Lothian, where pairs have bred in recent years. Reports of singles were received from a number of other areas.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* (AE*)

No reports of breeding by apparently escaped or introduced birds were received. Singles in Cumbria and the Scottish Borders may have been injured wild birds forced to summer.

Pink-footed Goose

Anser brachyrhynchus (AE*)

Small numbers were recorded from a number of localities, but no breeding was reported. Delany (1993) found a total of 88 individuals at 29 sites in 1991, including a breeding pair in Lancashire.

White-fronted Goose

Anser albifrons (AE*)

Two localities in two counties: four pairs bred. NORFOLK A pair of the European race *albifrons* bred at Stiffkey Fen, but the outcome was not reported. ARGYLL Three full-winged pairs of the Greenland race *flavirostris* bred on Islay; only three young fledged.

Delany (1993) reported a total of 54 *albifrons* in 1991, of which 40 were at six localities in Norfolk; the only record of a breeding pair that year was at one of these sites. The small group

of *flavirostris* on Islay stems from a waterfowl collection, and breeding success is typically low.

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* (E*)

Four localities in three counties: three pairs and one mixed pair bred.

GREATER MANCHESTER Two localities: pair bred unsuccessfully at Pennington Flash; pair with two fledged young in west of county from October onwards, but breeding site unknown. SHROPSHIRE Mixed pair (with Greylag Goose *A. anser*) bred, with four young seen. SOMERSET Pair with five young, Shapwick Heath, 30th May, had only three young by 14th June; the final outcome was not reported.

Reports of singles and small flocks were received from a number of counties. Delany (1993) reported 85 individuals at 27 localities in 1991, but very few breeding attempts have been reported and success seems low.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens* (AE*)

Two localities in two counties: two pairs bred.

HAMPSHIRE Two pairs bred at the regular site of Stratfield Saye and reared four young. ARGYLL A flock of 30-40 introduced birds, which moves between Coll and Mull, was present during the year, but there was no report of breeding.

A small number of records of non-breeding birds were received.

Emperor Goose *Anser canagicus* (E)

One locality: mixed pair bred.

CUMBRIA Mixed pair (of hybrid Emperor × Bar-headed Goose *A. indicus*) laid eggs but no young were seen.

This is the first time that this species has appeared in these reports, albeit as a mixed pair and thus not yet deserving the addition of an asterisk on the BOU's Category E list. Delany (1993) found just 14 individuals in 1991 at seven widely scattered localities. A handful of other records was received, including two Emperor Goose × Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* hybrids in Sussex.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* (AE*)

Minimum of nine localities in eight counties: at least 59 pairs bred or probably bred.

AVON Pair bred at Chew Valley Lake, laid three eggs, but no young seen. BERKSHIRE Five pairs bred at Eversley Gravel-pits, all failed.

CUMBRIA Ten pairs were proved to breed; a county-wide breeding-season survey revealed 96 adults and 18 young. ESSEX Single pairs bred at two sites, success not reported. HAMPSHIRE At least 25 pairs bred at Stratfield Saye, but all apparently failed. LANCASHIRE Estimated 15 pairs bred. NORFOLK No proven breeding records were received, but the presence of flocks of up to 133 birds indicates that the species breeds regularly somewhere in the county. WEST MIDLANDS Pair bred at the Vale and reared four young.

This is clearly an incomplete picture of the status of this species. Flocks of apparently non-breeding birds were reported from a number of localities.

Egyptian Goose

Alopochen aegyptiacus (CE*)

Minimum of 14 localities in eight counties: at least 127 pairs recorded/estimated.

BERKSHIRE Pair hatched ten young at Billingbear Golf Course and fledged seven. ESSEX Two pairs bred and a third probably did so, at two localities. GREATER MANCHESTER Pair with three young at Compstall Reservoir in January; may have bred again as pair with one young at Audenshaw Reservoir in July where definitely did not breed. NORFOLK 47 pairs known to have bred, but county total at least 100 pairs. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Three localities: pair reared three young at Attenborough Gravel-pits; pair reared six young at Center Parcs, Clipstone; one to three adults present at Rufford. SUFFOLK Nine pairs bred and four pairs possibly bred; incomplete survey. SURREY Four localities: pair with three young in June on River Thames, Shepperton; pair reared two young, Thorpe Water Park; pair with five small young, Camberley; three pairs at Old Oxted, but no proof of breeding. SUSSEX Pair with four well-grown young, River Adur, Shipley, in May-June; first breeding in county.

Coverage remains patchy.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* (BE*)

Three localities in two counties: one pair bred.

NORFOLK A pair bred at Sennowe Park, young were seen but final outcome unknown. A pair was present at Holkham Park all year, but is not thought to have bred. GWENT Pair at Celtic Manor Golf Course in April.

Single pairs bred in Norfolk in 1996 and 1997.

Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata* (E*)

Three localities in three counties: one pair bred. CAMBRIDGESHIRE 24 birds present at Ely on 30th June, but up to 20 subsequently removed by local council. CHESHIRE Pair bred at Shakerley, one young seen in July. SURREY Male and three females, Kew Gardens, June.

Records of non-breeding birds were received from a further seven counties. We do stress that this species is not simply a farmyard duck and that we welcome all records.

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa* (E*)

No breeding records were received.

DEVON Pair at Buckfastleigh, 1st April. KENT Single pairs present at Boughton Park in May and June, and Lamberhurst in April. SHROPSHIRE Pair at Middle Pool, Trench, from January to 22nd June. WEST MIDLANDS Pair at Dartmouth Park from July.

The above are the only breeding-season reports received of pairs. There were a number of other records of birds outside the breeding season from a further nine counties.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* (AE*)

Three localities in three counties: one pair and one mixed pair known to have bred.

NORFOLK Introduced/escaped population in Wensum Valley reported as still present, but no further information received. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Mixed pair (a female mated to a male Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*) at Lound produced one young seen on 21st June; male Red-crested Pochard present on 15th June only. SURREY Full-winged pair bred, Kew Gardens, three young reared.

Reports were received from a further eight counties, but with no indication of breeding. We would like to suggest to observers in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire that a survey of the apparently well-established population in the Cotswold Water Park would be extremely worthwhile.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* (A)

One locality: one pair.

LANCASHIRE One pair at Mere Sands Wood, but did not breed.

The birds at this site originally came from a waterfowl collection in 1988 and they may now have died out as a breeding population.

Silver Pheasant *Lophura nycthemera* (E*)

No reports were received.

Reeves's Pheasant *Symaticus reevesii* (E*)

Two localities in two counties: two birds.

DERBYSHIRE Male at Haddon Fields, late March and April. NORFOLK One at the Stanford Training Area, May-June and October.

These were the only records received.

Green Pheasant *Phasianus versicolor*

One locality: six birds.

NORFOLK Up to six birds, including five males, were present in potentially suitable habitat in the Ingham/Stalham/Sutton area in January to April and September to November.

This is a new species for these reports and one which does not appear in the BOU's British List Category E. The origin of the Norfolk birds is unknown.

Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus* (CE*)

21 localities in five counties: approximately 85-118 pairs recorded.

DEVON Two individuals recorded from one locality. NORFOLK Total of 49 birds noted at 11 localities, probably representing a minimum of 30-50 pairs; one pair known to have bred. SUFFOLK County total estimated at eight pairs, with records of up to six calling males at Kings Forest and a female with three young seen at Rushford. SUSSEX A more extensive survey than usual was carried out, which included data from three private estates not normally included in this report. About 25-30 pairs present and breeding on estate 1, but chick survival very poor and population maintained by captive breeding and release; two or three pairs at each of three sites on estate 2, present all year, but no evidence of breeding; two pairs at each of three sites on estate 3, also 5-6 pairs killed by Red Foxes *Vulpes vulpes*; single male seen and heard at Powdermill Reservoir, March-May; one, Vinehall Footland Wood, May; male, West Dean Woods, March. ABERDEENSHIRE Male seen Brimmond Hill, Aberdeen, 24th June.

This represents the most individuals ever recorded in these reports, but there are still a number of areas where this species is thought to occur, and for which no reports were received.

Lady Amherst's Pheasant

Chrysolophus amherstiae (CE*)

No reports were received. In 1998, a total of 85 territories was identified in Bedfordshire, but the survey has not been repeated.

Common Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* (E*)

No reports were received from the sites in Northamptonshire where pairs bred in 1998-1999.

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* (E)

One locality: three birds.

NORFOLK Three present all year at Stanford Water in apparently suitable habitat.

This is a new species for these reports.

Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria* (E*)

No breeding reports received.

The pair which bred at Fazackerley, Merseyside, from 1997 to 1999, appears to be no longer present; several of the flock, which had built up to around 12 birds, were shot in 1998.

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* (CE*)

Breeding in six counties: total population c. 4,300 individuals.

BERKSHIRE Concentrated in the easternmost part of the county, but has recently spread west as far as Bray and Maidenhead. At least 100 birds were roosting regularly at Wraysbury. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Small population in southeast of county, around Burnham, Dorney and Langley Park, as well as further north to Bourne End and Marlow; estimated total of about 100 birds in 2000. KENT Estimated 75-100 pairs on the Isle of Thanet, where principal roost, at Ramsgate, peaked at 435 in winter 2000/01 and total population estimated at 500 birds. Increasing population in west of county around Lewisham, with peak roost count of 641 in winter 2000/01. MIDDLESEX Largest counts from Bushy Park and Hampton Court areas, with at least 150-200 birds present. SURREY Peak roost counts in winter 2000/01 were of 2,999 at the Esher Rugby Club and 277 at Reigate. SUSSEX Expansion south from Surrey has reached Gatwick in the north of the county. There were scattered sightings of small numbers at several localities along the south coast between Hastings and Bognor, as well as some evidence for a small population based around

Brighton, but no breeding reports were received.

Based on the figures above, the total population estimate for the UK in winter 2000/01 was 4,352. Sightings not involving breeding birds were received from Avon, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Dorset, Essex, Hampshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and Warwickshire. Much of the information above came from Butler (2002) and Raven (2002), as well as from Chris Butler's website at <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~wolf0977/plan.html>, to which observers are requested to contribute their sightings.

Monk Parakeet *Myiopsitta monachus* (E*)

Two localities in two counties: breeding at one locality.

HERTFORDSHIRE The breeding population in Borehamwood numbered at least 20 birds, with five or six breeding pairs. SURREY The pair which bred at Lonsdale Reservoir in 1999 did not breed this year.

Scattered records suggest continuing escapes of this species, but no other breeding populations are known. The population of up to 30 birds which was present and breeding in Tiverton, Devon, between 1987 and 1998, died out after a change in ownership of the land where they were breeding.

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* (E*)

Two localities in two counties: one pair bred.

ENGLAND Pair bred at a site in northern England; three eggs hatched but no young were reared, probably because of bad weather. WARWICKSHIRE An unmated male held a territory all year in the same locality as in 1999.

The pair in the north of England bred for the fifth year running; this was their first failure.

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The specific status of Balearic and Yelkouan Shearwaters

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The taxonomy of the 'Manx' shearwaters has had a chequered history (see Bourne *et al.* 1988 for a map and an excellent review). In 1921, Harry Witherby reported that all extant British specimens of the 'Yelkouan Shearwater' *Puffinus (p.) yelkouan* (then known as 'Levantine Shearwater') belonged to an unusually dark form of Manx Shearwater *P. puffinus* (Witherby 1921). This newly discovered (dark) form had been named as *P. p. mauretanicus* by Dr P. R. Lowe earlier in 1921, based on a specimen from Algiers, Algeria (Lowe 1921). After the breeding grounds of *mauretanicus* were discovered in the Balearic Islands (Ticehurst & Whistler 1930; Bourne *et al.* 1988), a discussion was held at the British Ornithologists' Club in 1930, when both Lowe and Witherby suggested that *mauretanicus* was a separate species from *puffinus* (*Bull. Brit. Orn. Club* 50: 83-84). Subsequent revisions by Mathews (1934) and Murphy (1952) treated *puffinus*, *mauretanicus* and *yelkouan* (along with several other medium-sized shearwaters from the eastern Pacific and New Zealand) as subspecies of *P. puffinus*. These decisions were based on the Polytypic Species Concept (Futuyma 1998), which regards morphologically similar, but allopatric, taxa as subspecies of a single species, irrespective of their reproductive isolation or the existence of diagnostic differences.

Jehl (1982) suggested that at least *opisthomelas* (Black-vented Shearwater), *gavia* (Fluttering Shearwater), *huttoni* (Hutton's Shearwater) and *auricularis* (Townsend's Shear-

water) be regarded as separate species, although he argued that *newelli* (Newell's Shearwater) should be treated as a well-marked race of *P. auricularis*. His recommendations have become widely accepted (e.g. Warham 1990; del Hoyo *et al.* 1992). Bourne *et al.* (1988) reviewed the differences between *puffinus* and *mauretanicus/yelkouan* in plumage, size and migration pattern, and proposed that *puffinus* and *mauretanicus/yelkouan* should be considered as two separate species, with the name 'Yelkouan Shearwater' *Puffinus yelkouan* for the latter. Their review did not discuss why *mauretanicus* and *yelkouan* should still be regarded as conspecific.

In recent years, several authors have recognised *mauretanicus* and *yelkouan* as separate species (e.g. Walker *et al.* 1990; Altaba 1993; King 1997; Mayol 1997; Sangster *et al.* 1997; Heidrich *et al.* 1998; Wells 1998; Yésou & Paterson 1999). The split has been accepted by the Dutch and French rarities committees (Sangster *et al.* 1997; *Ornithos* 6: 189-192), and also by the BOU (BOURC 2001).

Differentiation and Phylogenetic Relationships *Plumage differences*

Several papers have described the plumage differences between *mauretanicus* and *yelkouan* (Yésou *et al.* 1990; Paterson & Yésou 1994; McGeehan & Gutiérrez 1997; Yésou & Paterson 1999). These conclude that *mauretanicus* is quite variable, and is sometimes characterised as 'polymorphic', implying that it occurs in

pale-breasted and dark-breasted forms. Yésou *et al.* (1990) stated that the majority are, in fact, intermediates, and have largely pale, dusky-whitish underparts and a variable dark breast-band. In the field, a minority of extreme variants of *mauretanicus* (those with very pale underparts) may be distinguishable from *yelkouan* only by size and structure, although there is some overlap in size (Yésou *et al.* 1990).

Osteological differences

Walker *et al.* (1990) reported that the structure of the humerus and cranium differ between *mauretanicus* and *yelkouan*. Unlike *puffinus* and *yelkouan*, the cranium of *mauretanicus* (and *holeae*; see below) shows a narrow parietal ridge. Although they did not describe the differences in the structure of the humerus and cranium in detail, Walker *et al.* presented photographs of skulls, humeri and coracoids which show such differences. They suggested that osteological data support the other evidence (i.e. plumage differences, separate breeding ranges and wintering quarters, and different migration patterns) and indicated that the two subspecies should be elevated to specific rank as *P. yelkouan* and *P. mauretanicus*. Altaba (1993) noted that the bill of *mauretanicus* is much stronger than that of *yelkouan*, which is shorter and more slender. He also described differences between *mauretanicus* and *yelkouan* in the cranium, the nasal bone, and the supraorbital and sagittal crests.

Molecular phylogenetics

Two molecular studies have included *puffinus*, *yelkouan* and *mauretanicus*. Austin (1996) sequenced 307 nucleotides (nt) of the mitochondrial gene cytochrome *b* of two individuals from each of these taxa. His phylogenetic trees indicate that, among living species, *yelkouan*

and *mauretanicus* are more closely related to each other than either is to *puffinus*, *huttoni*, *gavia* or *newelli*. His trees also indicate that the polytypic '*Puffinus puffinus*' of Mathews (1934) and Murphy (1952) is, in fact, a complex polyphyletic assemblage, supporting his recommendation to treat these taxa as species. Analyses of the sequence data using statistical techniques such as Neighbour-Joining and Maximum Parsimony (see Austin 1996) give very strong support to the view that *yelkouan* and *mauretanicus* are sister-taxa (i.e. each other's nearest relatives). Sequence divergence between *yelkouan* and *mauretanicus* was 3.0% (see table 1), and is the lowest of all the comparisons reported by Austin.

Heidrich *et al.* (1998) analysed (1) 300 nt of cytochrome *b* from three *puffinus*, ten *yelkouan* and 21 *mauretanicus*; and (2) 1,043 nt from two *puffinus*, ten *yelkouan* and five *mauretanicus*. Using both datasets, and a variety of statistical analyses, they generated phylogenetic trees revealing that *puffinus*, *yelkouan* and *mauretanicus* were reciprocally monophyletic, in other words each formed a separate, independent cluster. All their phylogenetic analyses grouped *yelkouan* and *mauretanicus* as sister-taxa, again with strong statistical support (95-100%). Sequence divergence between *yelkouan* and *mauretanicus* was 2.2-2.9%. The divergence between *puffinus* and *yelkouan* was slightly higher (2.9-3.5%). Assuming the conventional 2% sequence divergence per million years, and 2.2-2.9% sequence divergence between *yelkouan* and *mauretanicus*, the separation of these taxa probably occurred more than one million years ago.

Lack of interbreeding

Both taxa occur in the Balearic Sea and off the Mediterranean coast of northeast Spain just

Table 1. Differentiation among some medium-sized shearwaters *Puffinus*, represented as the proportion of bases at which they differ in part of the mitochondrial cytochrome *b* gene (from Austin 1996).

	<i>puffinus</i>	<i>yelkouan</i>	<i>mauretanicus</i>	<i>newelli</i>	<i>gavia</i>
<i>huttoni</i>	6.57	7.29	6.92	6.97	4.38
<i>gavia</i>	4.42	6.56	6.20	4.79	
<i>newelli</i>	3.03	5.12	4.76		
<i>mauretanicus</i>	5.45	3.00			
<i>yelkouan</i>	5.81				

prior to breeding, yet they are allopatric during the breeding season itself. Ringing recoveries provide no evidence of exchange between colonies of *yelkouan* and *mauretanicus* (Garcias & Cardona 1995), and there is no evidence of interbreeding between these taxa.

Fossil species

Three extinct species of shearwater, first described recently, are relevant to the taxonomy of *mauretanicus* and *yelkouan*. These all appear to be closely related to (or belong to) the clade formed by *mauretanicus* and *yelkouan*, although the fossil material has not been subject to phylogenetic analysis.

- *Puffinus nestoni* Alcover (1989) was described from Pliocene deposits on Eivissa (Ibiza), Balearic Islands. It was a large species, most similar to *mauretanicus* but with different proportions, including a particularly robust bill.
- *Puffinus holeae* Walker, Wragg and Harrison (1990) was described from the Pleistocene of Fuerteventura, Canary Islands. It was originally named *Puffinus holei* but this name must be amended to *holeae*, since it was named after Mrs Hole. Bones of this species were later also found on Lanzarote (Alcover & McMinn 1995). The authors compared their material with *puffinus*, *mauretanicus*, *yelkouan* and other shearwaters. On the basis of characteristics of the skull and humerus, *holeae* is probably more closely related to *mauretanicus* than to *yelkouan* or *puffinus* (Walker *et al.* 1990). This species was also larger than *mauretanicus*.
- *Puffinus olsoni* McMinn, Jaume and Alcover (1990) co-existed with *holeae* on Fuerteventura and Lanzarote during the Pleistocene, and has also been found at Figueira Brava, Portugal (Alcover & McMinn 1995). According to McMinn *et al.* (1990) and Alcover & McMinn (1995), it also belongs to the '*puffinus* group'. It was smaller than the other species, being intermediate in size between *mauretanicus* and Little Shearwater *P. assimilis*, yet proportionally it had the largest wingspan (Alcover & McMinn 1995). It differs in several osteological characters from other species in the complex. The deposits which have yielded *olsoni* are quite recent, and at least one fossil specimen shows signs of associations with Man and introduced mammals: remains of *olsoni* with

butchering marks were found in an archaeological deposit on Fuerteventura (Alcover & McMinn 1995).

The exact affinities and relationships of these fossil forms must await a detailed phylogenetic analysis. It is, however, evident that they are diagnosably distinct on metric and skeletal characters, certainly more different from each other than are *mauretanicus* and *yelkouan*.

Discussion

Diagnosability and species status

The differences in plumage are not diagnosable (based on the evidence in Yésou *et al.* 1990), because some pale *mauretanicus* are apparently indistinguishable from *yelkouan*. Nevertheless, the molecular and osteological differences provide evidence that *mauretanicus* and *yelkouan* have separate recent evolutionary histories. Although it is not clear whether *mauretanicus* and *yelkouan* would interbreed if they were in contact during the breeding season, the molecular evidence and the results from ringing recoveries suggest strongly that, at the very most, this does not happen regularly. Austin's (1996) molecular data also support the recognition of *newelli*, *gavia* and *huttoui* as separate species. Since *auricularis* was not included in his analysis, no conclusion can be reached concerning its relationship with *newelli*.

Similarity in vocalisations

Bretagnolle & Zotier (1998) proposed the maintenance of subspecific status for *mauretanicus* based on similarities in vocalisations and the absence of differential responses to calls of *yelkouan* and *mauretanicus*. Heidrich *et al.* (1998) challenged this argument on two grounds. Firstly, positive responses to heterospecific calls are not rare in Procellariiformes; for example, non-breeding European Storm-petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* respond to the calls of Leach's Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* (and vice versa). European Storm-petrels will even respond to anthropogenic sounds such as the music of rock band *Dire Straits* (Jeff Higgott, pers. comm.)! Secondly, since *yelkouan* and *mauretanicus* have allopatric breeding ranges, there is no reason for different calls to have evolved.

Conclusion

The three extant taxa from the North Atlantic and the Mediterranean Sea (*puffinus*, *yelkouan*

and *mauretanicus*) are sufficiently differentiated to be regarded as representing separate evolutionary lineages, and hence merit specific status under the Evolutionary Species Concept (Mayden 1997; de Queiroz 1999). The molecular data indicate that *huttoni*, *gavia* and *newelli* are also similarly distinct. We recommend that Manx Shearwater *P. puffinus*, Balearic Shearwater *P. mauretanicus* and Yelkouan Shearwater *P. yelkouan* be recognised as separate species.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to Jeff Higgott and Mark Dennis for critically reading an earlier version of this paper, and to Richard Porter for comments on the etymology of 'Yelkouan', which is the Turkish word for 'shearwater', and seems more appropriate than 'Levantine', which refers to the region along the coasts of Lebanon, Syria and Israel, where the species is not, in fact, all that common.

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Wader migration in Britain & Ireland: continuing studies in a changing environment

John H. Marchant

ABSTRACT The special place of Britain & Ireland in wader distributions and flyways has been revealed and illuminated through the efforts of many kinds of birdwatchers and scientists, using methods ranging from simple counting and recording to isotopic analysis and satellite-tracking. Knowledge of some topics is still inadequate or lacking altogether, however, and this may hamper wader conservation. The migration patterns of waders in Britain & Ireland appear to be changing in response to broad-scale changes in climate and land-use, and are likely to continue to do so over future decades. Against this background, the conservation of wader populations will depend on continuing studies, using the full range of traditional and advanced techniques.

The occurrence of waders in Britain & Ireland

Though geographically small, the islands of Britain & Ireland are remarkable in world terms for the numbers and diversity of waders present during the year, including breeding birds, both migrant and resident, passage migrants and winter visitors. Britain & Ireland supports breeding populations of most of the wader species that nest at comparable latitudes across Continental Europe, although several are rare and confined to northern Scotland or southeast England. Flyway studies place the region at a unique 'T-junction', at which species like Red Knot *Calidris canutus* and Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, migrating from the eastern Canadian Arctic towards wintering areas on eastern Atlantic shores, meet their counterparts on journeys to similar wintering areas from Arctic regions of the Old World. Breeding waders from more than half of the Arctic region are thus regularly encountered as migrants in Britain & Ireland, and are occasionally supplemented by individuals from more remote parts of the

Arctic. By virtue of its position on the edge of Europe, the region also attracts vagrant waders from central and southern parts of Europe and Asia, and these add to its overall species richness. Britain is probably richer in wader species than any other area of comparable size, with 77 species currently listed, more than one-third of the global total.

It is, however, our wintering wader populations that are most remarkable. On a global scale, there are few places north of 45°N where waders can be found wintering. Hot springs and other isolated patches of unfrozen habitat farther north may hold a few individuals, but large concentrations of waders in the northern half of the northern hemisphere are found only on the western fringes of Europe and North America. The shores of Britain & Ireland, warmed by the Gulf Stream, form the northernmost wintering grounds for many wader species, and the closest suitable wintering places for waders nesting in a broad swathe of the Arctic, from northernmost Canada across Greenland, Iceland and northern Continental

Europe to the Taimyr Peninsula in north-central Russia. As well as a uniquely mild winter climate for its latitude, Britain & Ireland has numerous wide estuaries, many of which have a tidal range that is among the world's highest, exposing extensive intertidal feeding grounds for long periods twice a day.

How has our knowledge of wader movements been gathered?

Much of our knowledge of waders in Britain & Ireland is the result of simple observations of their occurrence and visible migrations. To be of lasting value, these sightings need to be summarised and published, not consigned simply to memories and personal diaries. Thousands of birdwatchers throughout Britain & Ireland provide valuable data for migration studies by submitting records to a county or regional bird recorder. For scarce and rare species, county reports feed through to national reports in this journal and in *Irish Birds*. Unsystematic, but widespread, bird recording is a good way to determine the seasonal ranges of birds and the sites they use on passage, and can often turn up unexpected information in quick response to changing patterns. Systematic surveys, such as the Wetland Bird Survey, can add a long-term framework to counting and recording, and ensure that not only unusually high counts, but also absences and low counts, contribute fully to the picture.

Knowledge of bird movements gleaned from observations is supplemented by other methods of study, the most important being ringing and colour-marking studies, and radio- and satellite-tracking, which increasingly shift the focus of research from the species as a whole to the individual bird (Marchant 2002). Whereas observations and surveys can document the breeding and wintering areas of particular species and the sites they use on passage, they cannot identify the sites used by particular individuals, or any differential use by particular races or sex or age classes – unless these groups can be readily

separated in the field. This requires some form of individual marking.

Widespread catching and individual marking of birds with numbered rings began in Britain & Ireland in 1909 and currently produces around 11,000 ring-recoveries each year from around three-quarters of a million birds ringed (Clark & Wernham 2002). The development of the cannon-net in the 1960s led to large increases in the numbers of shore waders caught for ringing and, consequently, to a great surge of data on wader movements. The contribution made by the few thousand amateur bird ringers in Britain & Ireland to the study of bird migration, in terms both of personal time and expense and of information gained, is quite remarkable.

The typical ring-recovery, say from a bird ringed and later found dead, provides just two fixed points in time and space in the life of that particular individual. Other sites the bird may have visited, and the route and timing of the movement between the two points, are unknown. Consequently, interpreting a single ring-recovery may be difficult, especially if neither ringing nor recovery location indicates where the bird may have been hatched or was breeding. Since recovery rates for waders are often less than 3%, multiple reports of a single individual are rare. The addition of a unique marking that can be read in the field, however, such as a combination of colour-rings or a numbered darvic, has enabled the collection of multiple reports for many individuals of an increasing range of species. Waders, with their long legs and preference for open habitats, are especially well suited to colour-ring studies.



Richard Chandler

338. Turnstones *Arenaria interpres*, Anglesey, July 1998.

Whereas ringing itself requires government licensing and a long period of training, reporting a colour-ring sighting is a valuable contribution that any birdwatcher armed with notebook and telescope can make to ringing studies.

The development of radio-tracking has enabled yet more detail to be gathered about the lives of individual birds. Unlike any visual methods of study, radio-tracking can be used to fix the position of individuals at night as well as by day. For example, nocturnal studies of Woodcocks *Scolopax rusticola* have revealed an unexpected use of pasture for feeding. In most radio-tracking studies, birds carrying transmitters have been trailed by researchers carrying directional aerials and other reception equipment, either on foot or in a vehicle. In others, a set of receivers fixed in strategic positions, for example around an estuary, record the positions of birds in a study area automatically.

The geographical limitations of ground-based radio-tracking can now be overcome by satellite-tracking, through which global surveillance of individual birds is now a possibility. Detailed routes have been published for individual wildfowl (geese and swans) and raptors on migration to or from Britain & Ireland, and selected individuals can be tracked on the Internet almost in real time. As satellite-transmitter technology improves, we can look forward to its use on smaller birds, including waders, addressing many of the currently unanswered questions about wader migration. Unless costs fall by several orders of magnitude, however, it is likely that satellite-tracking will continue to focus on only a small number of individuals, and that a number of assumptions will have to be made to relate the results from these individuals to the movements of the species or population as a whole (Wernham & Baillie 2002).

A complete picture of a species' movements emerges only when the results of all available study methods are combined, with relatively few ring-recoveries or satellite tracks for individual birds set against a more general background knowledge of the movements of the species, derived most straightforwardly from simple observation and recording.

Ringing as a tool for studying wader migration
The BTO's *Migration Atlas* (Wernham *et al.* 2002) seeks to bring together all that is known

about bird movements involving Britain & Ireland. The results from bird ringing are discussed, alongside those from other information sources, to give a full and rounded picture of the seasonal migrations and other movements of the birds that breed, winter, or pass through the region. Of 188 species covered in depth, 26 are waders; a further eight wader species are dealt with in somewhat less detail.

Over 1,000 ring-recovery maps have been newly prepared for the *Migration Atlas*. Some update previously published analyses, but many present information that is completely new. It is these ringing results that have typically provided the first evidence to link breeding and wintering areas for British & Irish bird populations, sometimes in counter-intuitive ways. For example, it would surely be anticipated that summer recoveries of Red Knots ringed in Britain & Ireland would be in the Russian Arctic, where so many of our waders originate, whereas, in fact, almost all recoveries are in Greenland and northeast Canada (fig. 1). A single recovery mapped in Siberia is an indication that nominate-race (Siberian) Red Knots also occur here, but the ringing evidence suggests that these birds are, in fact, remarkably rare in Britain & Ireland (Boyd & Piersma 2001). Most surprising is the relatively recent discovery that many Red Knots which leave British estuaries in spring for stopover sites in northern Norway are bound for Greenland, rather than for Siberia (Piersma & Davidson 1992).

Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica* are Palearctic nesting birds, found between Norway

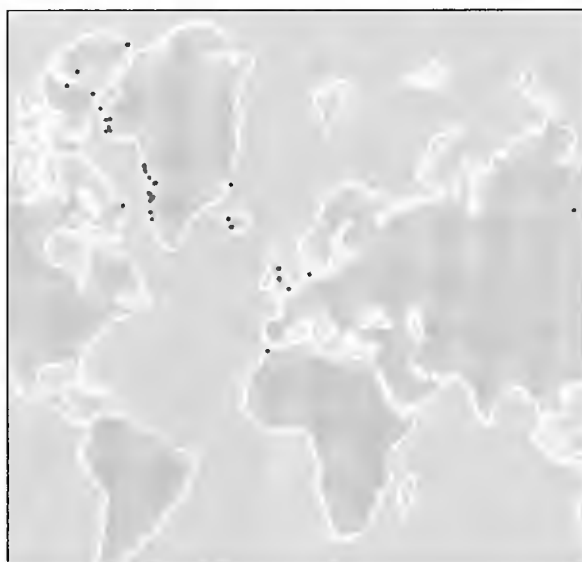


Fig. 1. The locations in June of 81 Red Knots *Cahnis canutus* ringed or recovered in Britain & Ireland.

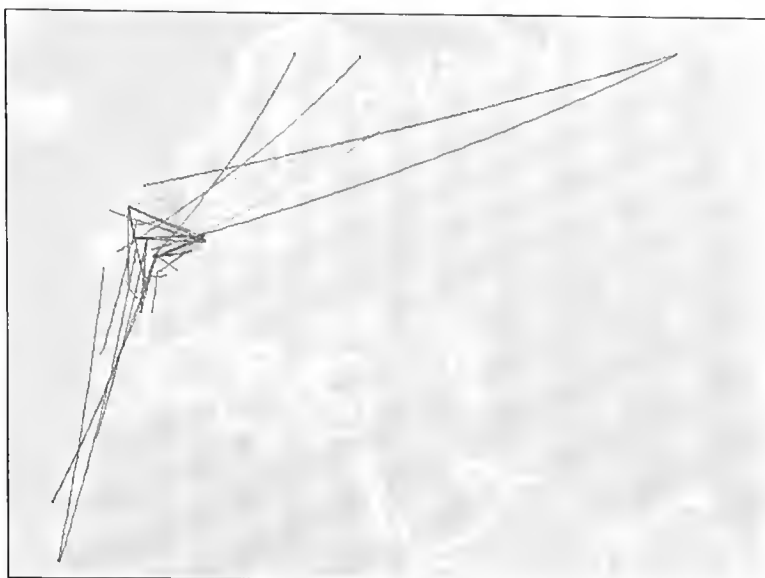
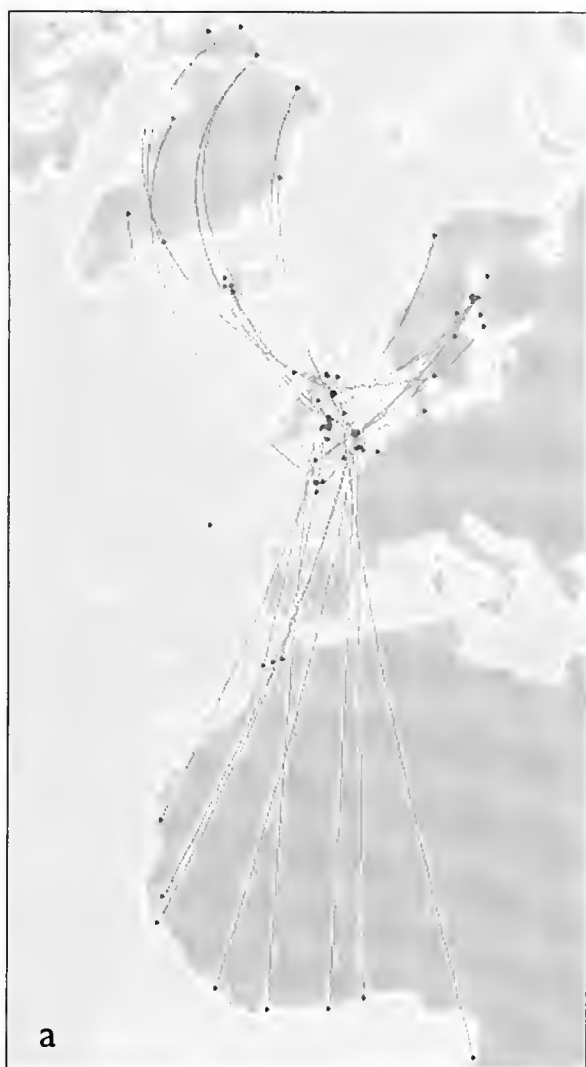


Fig. 2. The recovery locations and all included exchanges of Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica* between Britain & Ireland and abroad. Those abroad in the breeding season (five, red) and winter (34, blue) are differentiated from those abroad during other, or unknown periods (100, grey).

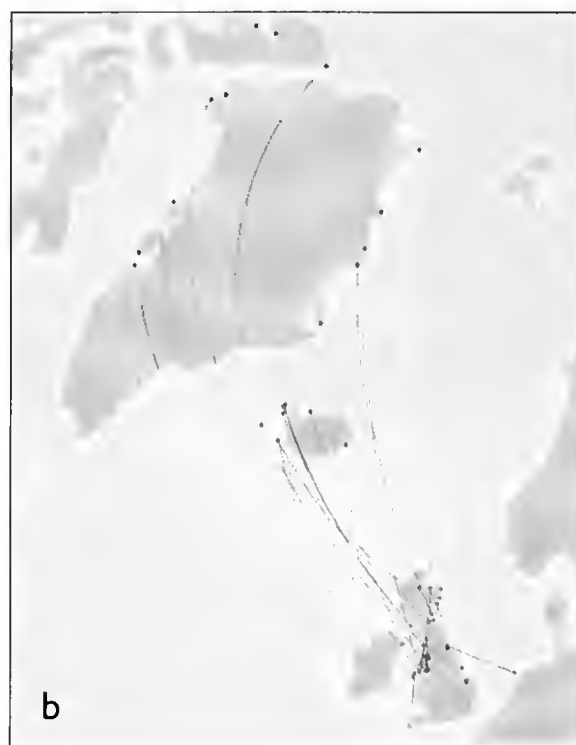
and western Alaska. The larger, dark-backed race *baueri*, which occurs in the eastern half of this range, has not yet been seen in Britain & Ireland. Ring-recoveries indicate that birds from



throughout the range of the western, nominate race occur in Britain & Ireland, and suggest that this is an important winter destination or stepping stone on passage for the entire population of this race, not just for a section of it (fig. 2). Many individuals that pass through British and Irish estuaries spend the winter on the West African coast.

The Turnstone is found nesting on almost all Arctic coasts, and around the Baltic Sea. The ring-recoveries from those birds which occur in Britain & Ireland in autumn identify the Baltic as a major source of passage migrants but suggest that perhaps none come from farther east (fig. 3a). By contrast, recoveries from winter ringing link Britain & Ireland exclusively to the breeding grounds in Greenland and northeast Canada (fig. 3b). Ringing has thus established that the Turnstones which British and Irish birdwatchers see include birds both of Baltic and of Nearctic origin, but that these groups

Fig. 3. (a) Locations during the breeding season (41, red) and in winter (108, blue), and movements of over 20 km, of Turnstones *Arenaria interpres* present in Britain & Ireland during autumn. **(b)** Locations during the breeding season (36, red) and spring (50, grey), and movements of over 20 km, of Turnstones present in Britain & Ireland during winter.



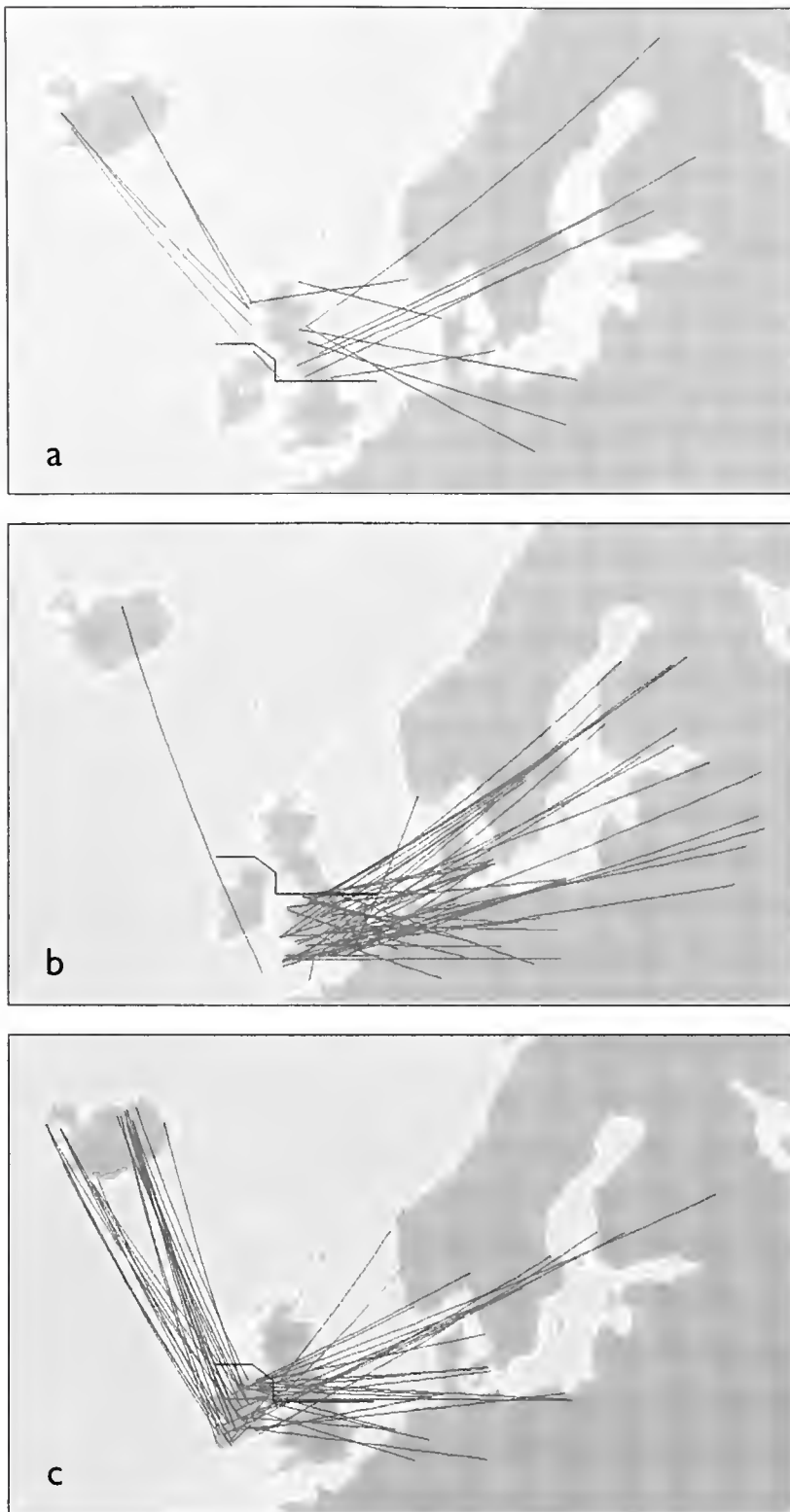


Fig. 4. Exchanges of Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* between (a) northern Britain (16), (b) southern Britain (56), and (c) Ireland (51), and abroad.

have quite different seasonal patterns of occurrence.

The *Migration Atlas* has also found many cases where different subpopulations occur simultaneously in Britain & Ireland, but with different regional distributions. For example, the regional recovery maps for Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* show a clear regional separation

between visitors from Iceland and those from Continental Europe (fig. 4). Icelandic birds (race *faeroeensis*) apparently occur exclusively in Ireland and in westernmost Britain, south to Scilly (although passage through the Northern Isles is also suspected). Continental visitors, on the other hand, are found throughout Britain, but especially in the south, and in Ireland too, alongside Icelandic birds in some cases but with a more easterly distribution.

Within populations, ringing also demonstrates that there are differential movements between breeding and wintering areas for different age and sex classes. For waders breeding in Britain & Ireland, such differential movements have been detected between adults and immatures for six out of seven species that were tested (Siriwardena & Wernham 2002). To conserve migratory populations effectively, should that be required, a detailed understanding of the birds' locations at all seasons is essential. A good knowledge is also needed of any differential movements made by the species, since a conservation programme that benefited only one sex or age class of the population would be unlikely to succeed.

Ringing is far from being just about ring-recoveries, however. Much emphasis has been placed in recent years on its other roles in monitoring populations and assessing productivity and survival. The capture of birds for ringing is the basis for the collection

of valuable biometric data from live birds, and for the more advanced migration-study techniques such as radio- and satellite-tracking, the use of genetic markers, and studies that infer breeding or moulting locations from the ratios of stable isotopes. Ringing is also likely to remain the most cost-effective and population-representative approach to migra-

tion studies in the foreseeable future, but its value will be greatly enhanced if validated against the more novel and expensive technologies, and used in combination with them.

Remaining unknowns

As well as summarising known patterns, the *Migration Atlas* draws special attention to what is not yet known about the movements of British and Irish birds.

The *Atlas* will, hopefully, inspire new studies specifically designed to fill some of the remaining gaps in our knowledge, perhaps by using new techniques or in some cases by the redirection of existing studies (Wernham & Baillie 2002).

Tables 1 and 2 present summaries of current knowledge of movements for British and Irish wader species. The symbols in these tables indicate a simple categorisation of the relative state of knowledge of each topic, based largely on the information available to each species-text author of the *Atlas* and on a crude assessment of the ring-recovery data. The data are extracted and simplified from comprehensive tabulations by Wernham & Baillie (2002), who provide more information on how the tables were constructed.

Among regular breeding waders in Britain & Ireland, information on movements is particularly poor for Dunlin *Calidris alpina*, while among wintering populations, perhaps the worst known are those of Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* and Green Sandpiper *T. ochropus*; rare species, even less well known, are not tabulated. Whereas ringing data allow differences between age groups to be tested for seven breeding and four wintering wader species, no species had enough recoveries of known sex to test for differences between the sexes (Siriwardena & Wernham 2002). Differential movements between the sexes are remarkably poorly known for waders, despite the often-considerable size and structural differences between the sexes which make differential movements especially likely among this group of birds.



Richard Chandler

339. Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, Kent, September 1986.

Changes in migration patterns: the need for continuing study

Most of the existing knowledge of bird movements has been gathered only during the last 100 years or so. Over a similar period into the future, most scientists expect to see an unprecedented rise in global temperatures, with far-reaching consequences for the global environment and for terrestrial plant and animal communities everywhere. Likely consequences for the UK include a rise in average annual temperatures of between 2°C and 3.5°C by the 2080s and a sea-level rise of 26-86 cm in southeast England over the same period (Hulme *et al.* 2002).

Because waders so often live in extreme habitats, make journeys that are close to the limits of their physiological capabilities, and rely heavily on traditional stopover sites on migration, they are likely to be more susceptible than most birds to global climate change. In the UK, changes in winter wader distribution and numbers have already occurred in response to the warmer winters of recent decades, and further change will occur as coastlines and sediment distribution change with rising sea levels (Austin *et al.* 2001). Table 1 also indicates that some change has already occurred in the wintering grounds of waders which breed in Britain & Ireland. Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* and Eurasian Curlews *Numenius arquata* made significantly fewer long-distance movements after their median recovery year than before, and are thus apparently becoming less migratory, whereas Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* has shown the opposite tendency (Siriwardena & Wernham 2002). Our

understanding of temporal change is very poor, however, for waders wintering in Britain & Ireland (table 2).

Northward and uphill movements of vegetation zones during the present century are predicted to reduce drastically the extent of treeless Arctic tundra where many waders nest (Zöckler & Lysenko 2000). The prospect of Arctic waders contending with the compounded problems of shrinking breeding areas and ongoing disruption to their patterns of migration is extremely worrying for their long-term conservation.

Future bird-migration studies will, therefore, not simply be a question of plugging the gaps in existing knowledge. There will also need to be a constant re-evaluation of what we think we already know, to ensure that the information remains valid. Such an effort will require the deployment of the full range of study skills, from simple bird recording to the most advanced technology, and the keen participation of volunteer birdwatchers and ringers as well as professional ornithologists.

Acknowledgments

Dr Christine Wernham and Dr Tony Prater kindly provided comments on a draft of this article.

Footnote to tables 1 & 2

1. Routes and timing of migration: refers to both spring and autumn migrations. '•• (-S)' = information moderate for autumn migration but poor for spring

2. Winter movements: refers to both within-winter and between-winter ring-recoveries. '•• (-W)' = information moderate for between-winter movements but poor for within-winter movements

Table 1. Summary of current knowledge of the movements of British and Irish breeding populations of waders, based on subjective assessments by species-text authors for the Migration Atlas (Wernham et al. 2002). The codes '••••' (good), '••' (moderate) and '•' (poor) reflect the relative quality of information available on each topic. Adapted and abridged from Wernham & Baillie (2002).

Species	Juvenile movements	Natal dispersal	Breeding dispersal	Routes and timing of migration ¹	Wintering area	Sex differences	Age differences	Regional differences	Migration strategy	Summering areas of immatures	Temporal change in wintering areas
Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	•	••	•	••	••	•	••	•	-	•	••
Stone-curlew <i>Burhinus oedipus</i>	•	•	•	•• (-S)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Little Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius dubius</i>	•	•	•	•• (-S)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Great Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	•	•	•	••	••	•	•	•	•	-	•
Dotterel <i>Charadrius morinellus</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
European Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Northern Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	••	••	•	••	••	•	••	••	•	••	•
Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Ruff <i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Common Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	•	•	•	•• (-S)	••	•	•	•	-	•	•
Woodcock <i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	•	•	•	•• (-S)	••	•	•	••	-	•	•
Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	••	•	•	•• (-S)	••	•	••	•	-	••	••
Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	•	•	•	••	••	•	••	•	-	•	•
Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

Table 2. Summary of current knowledge of the movements of British and Irish wintering populations of waders. Sources and conventions are as for Table 1.

Species	Winter movements ²	Routes and timing of migration ¹	Breeding origins	Sex differences	Age differences	Regional differences	Migration strategy	Temporal change in movements
Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	::	::	::	•	::	::	•	•
Great Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	•	•	::	•	•	•	•	•
European Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	:: (-W)	::	•	•	•	•	•	•
Northern Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	:: (-W)	::	::	•	•	•	•	•
Red Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i>	::	::	::	•	•	•	::	•
Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>	•	•	::	•	•	•	•	•
Purple Sandpiper <i>Calidris maritima</i>	•	•	::	•	•	•	•	•
Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Ruff <i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Jack Snipe <i>Lymnocyptes minimus</i>	:: (-W)	::	•	•	•	•	•	•
Common Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	::	::	::	•	•	•	•	•
Woodcock <i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	::	::	::	•	•	•	•	•
Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i>	::	::	::	•	•	•	•	•
Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	:: (-W)	:: (-S)	•	•	•	•	•	•
Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	::	::	::	•	•	•	•	•
Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Green Sandpiper <i>Tringa ochropus</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	::	::	::	•	•	•	•	•

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The Carl Zeiss Award 2002



The British Birds Rarities Committee, established in 1959, has been supported and sponsored by Carl Zeiss Ltd, the renowned German optical company, since 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 475). The Carl Zeiss Award was established in 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 589) to encourage the submission of photographs, as supporting evidence, with written descriptions of rarities. Photographs are an important, at times critical, source of information, and are in many cases an integral part of record assessment by BBRC.

Recognising the importance of photographic evidence, and the role of photographers who supply the images, Carl Zeiss Ltd presents each year a pair of Carl Zeiss binoculars to the individual judged to have submitted the most instructive photograph, or series of photographs, of a British rarity. This year, from the wealth of material submitted in support of rarity descriptions, we arrived at a short list of four entries, listed below in Voous order.

'Soft-plumaged petrel' *Pterodroma madeira/feae/mollis*
Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni*
Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica*
Whiskered Tern *Chlidomias hybrida*

Gary Bellingham
Gary Bellingham
Mike Malpass
Mike Wallen

Gary Bellingham had two sets of photographs in our short list, including a superb series of the Black-winged Pratincole on Anglesey in July 2001. We particularly liked the photograph of this elegant wader wing-stretching, clearly showing a lack of contrast between the dark wing-coverts and the secondaries, and the absence of a white trailing edge to the inner wing, features which separate it from Collared Pratincole *G. pratincola*. Out-of-season terns can often prove difficult rarities to assess, and the marvellous series of images by Mike Malpass of the first-winter Gull-billed Tern at Titchwell, Norfolk, in November 2001 (see also plates 14 & 294), not only helped our assessment, but provided valuable reference material of a plumage rarely seen in this country. In many ways, the same was true for Mike Wallen's shots of the Whiskered Tern at Willen Lake, Buckinghamshire, in October 2001 (see also plates 295 & 296), which show an individual moulting into first-winter plumage. For many of us, Whiskered Tern is unfamiliar in anything other than spring plumage, since not only is it in

spring when the majority of vagrants occur in Britain, but it is also when most of us travel to its breeding grounds on birding trips.

There was, however, one clear winner this year. Without wishing to influence the deliberations of BOURC and BBRC, we felt that the clarity of image in Gary Bellingham's photographs of the 'Soft-plumaged petrel', taken from the MV *Scillonian*, about 95 km southwest of Scilly in August 2001, may allow this individual to be identified at specific level, since even details of the bill's proportions can be seen in the photographs (see also *Brit. Birds* 94: plates 280-281). Outstanding quality alone makes this series a worthy winner of the 2001 Carl Zeiss Award, but since it also constitutes 'great photos of a stunning rarity' the outcome was a racing certainty.

Gary Bellingham becomes the eleventh winner of the Carl Zeiss Award, and for his prize was able to choose either a Carl Zeiss 7×42BGAT* or one of the models from the 'Victory' range, either 8×40BT* or 10×40BT*; he selected the 10×40BT*.

Colin Bradshaw, Chris Kehoe & Roger Riddington
c/o 9 Tynemouth Place, Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear NE30 4BJ

Gary Bellingham



Gary Bellingham

340-341. Winner of The Carl Zeiss Award 2002: 'Soft-plumaged petrel' *Pterodroma madeira/feae/mollis*, at sea, about 95 km southwest of Scilly, August 2001.



Gary Bellingham

342. Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni*, Mona, Anglesey, July 2001.

Mike Malpass



343. Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica*, Titchwell, Norfolk, November 2001.



Mike Wallen

344. Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*, Willen Lake, Buckinghamshire, October 2001.



The British Birds Rarities Committee is sponsored by Carl Zeiss Ltd

Conservation research news

Compiled by Mark Eaton, Andy Evans and Chris Bowden



Starving sparrows

The September issue of *BB* contained the surprising news that House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* was to be added to the Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern after a sustained and serious population decline (*Brit. Birds* 95: 410-448). One theory for the decline was that an increase in the cleanliness of farmyards had reduced the amount of spilt grain available during winter and that mortality rates had increased as a consequence. A joint study by Oxford University and RSPB was undertaken by Dave Hole and his colleagues to test this theory. Four study farms were chosen; the population at one (site A) had declined by 80% in 30 years, whereas the populations at the other three were believed to be stable. Dave measured the productivity of sparrows in nestboxes at two sites, provided supplementary food during winter and measured apparent survival rates at all sites through a programme of colour-ringing and re-sighting. He also conducted genetic analyses on all four populations.

Hole *et al.* found that productivity at site A was no different to that in 1967-71, before the sparrows began to decline, and also that it was no different to productivity at site B (where the population was stable). They also found that provision of supplementary food increased sur-

vival rates, but only at site A (with the declining population). Here, the chances of survival between November and March were improved from 39% to 65%, the lower rate being consistent with a declining population. At the other sites, survival rates were sufficient to maintain a stable population. Genetic analysis revealed a low level of immigration into any of the populations, reflecting the species' sedentary nature. It seems that a local reduction in food supply, coupled with low rates of immigration, will result in localised population decline and ultimately extinction. The consequent increased distance between populations will further inhibit the chances of recolonisation once a population is in decline.

It is extremely difficult and time-consuming to measure survival rates accurately. This study is particularly important because it is the first to demonstrate that a decrease in overwinter survival, owing to food shortages, is the causal mechanism in the decline of a farmland bird species.

Hole, D. G., Whittingham, M. J., Bradbury, R. B., Anderson, G. Q. A., Lee, P. M., Wilson, J. D., & Krebs, J. R. 2002. Widespread local House Sparrow extinctions. Agricultural intensification is blamed for the plummeting populations of these birds. *Nature* 418: 931-932.

Spoonbill Sandpipers on the decline

In a country where an expedition to count birds may involve little more than a car journey and then a couple of hours' walk into the hills, it is easy to forget the huge logistical problems faced by ornithologists studying threatened birds in the less populated parts of the world. Pavel Tomkovich and his colleagues have just published the results of their surveys of one of the world's most sought-after waders, Spoonbill Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*. The

surveys, in two regions bordering the Bering and Chukchi Seas, demanded large-scale operations for several teams of observers, with sites taking up to a month to cover and involving caterpillar vehicles and boats to transport the researchers around the sites.

Six new breeding sites were discovered, but the numbers of birds involved were actually much lower than expected, and the species was not recorded in other apparently suitable areas

surveyed. Eight birds were colour-marked to help count the number of individuals in an area more accurately, and it was found that spring counts of unmarked birds needed to be increased by 20% to reflect more accurately the true numbers present. Four previously known breeding sites held just one displaying male each, and numbers had decreased at all of the 22 areas surveyed. Overall, the number of breeding Spoonbill Sandpipers (already classed as globally 'Vulnerable' based on an estimate of 2,000-2,800 pairs in 1977) was thought to be fewer than 1,000 pairs.

Although there are localised problems on the breeding grounds, such as industrial pollution, and disturbance by leisure boats, dogs and humans, these are not on a scale which could

account for the overall decline. No studies have been carried out away from the breeding grounds, but there is some suggestion from ringing recoveries that hunting may be a threat on passage or in wintering areas in China. Monitoring numbers along the flyway sites and on the wintering grounds has never been seriously attempted, but now seems essential in order to gauge more clearly the reasons for such a sharp decline and the rate of the decline. Tomkovich *et al.* propose that the IUCN status should be changed from 'Vulnerable' to 'Endangered'.

Tomkovich, P. S., Syroechkovski, E. E. Jr, Lappo, E. G., & Zockler, C. 2002. First indications of a sharp population decline in the globally threatened Spoonbill Sandpiper, *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*. *Bird Conservation International* 12: 1-18.

Putting a price on the environment

For many readers of *BB*, the case for the conservation of the environment is self-evident, based on the intrinsic worth of the natural world. Many people, however, including some world leaders, do not share this view. To persuade such decision-makers of the need for conservation action, a more pragmatic approach is required: the 'marketing' of the economic value of nature.

A recent review by Balmford *et al.* (2002) examined over 300 case studies, seeking examples where researchers compared the economic value of goods and services delivered by relatively intact biomes to the value of the same biomes when converted to typical forms of human use. This is a difficult comparison to make, since it involves measuring the value of both obvious benefits such as timber and food crops, and less tangible services such as erosion prevention and atmospheric control. For example, the economic benefits of a mangrove ecosystem in Thailand, including timber, charcoal, non-timber forest products, offshore fisheries and storm protection, exceeded by 70% those of the shrimp farming which replaced it. Similarly, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the short-term benefits of highly destructive blast

fishing on coral reefs in the Philippines were outweighed by the long-term benefits of sustainable fishing plus coastal protection and tourism had those reefs been left intact. Using estimates from five case studies, the authors conservatively estimated that the net global cost of a single year's habitat conversion at current rates is in the order of \$250 billion a year for that year, and for every year thereafter.

Balmford *et al.* concluded by estimating that an annual outlay in the order of \$45 billion/year would enable the creation of an effective global network of reserves on land and sea. Although this cost is some seven times the current global conservation expenditure, they estimate that the 'goods and services' from such a reserve network would total some \$4,400-5,200 billion: a hundred-fold return on the conservation investment. Further rigorous analysis, providing hard facts to support the conservation argument, may be vital if we are to turn the tide of environmental destruction the world over.

Balmford, A., Bruner, A., Cooper, P., Costanza, R., Farber, S., Green, R. E., Jenkins, M., Jefferiss, P., Jessamy, V., Madden, J., Munro, K., Myers, N., Naeem, S., Paavola, J., Rayment, M., Rosendo, S., Roughgarden, J., Trumper, K., & Turner, K. 2002. Economic Reasons for Conserving Wild Nature. *Science* 297: 950-953.

Notes

Birds collecting insects from trains and vehicles

Previous notes in *British Birds* have recorded Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* pecking insect remains from parked cars and a stationary locomotive, and Red-legged Partridges *Alectoris rufa* and House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* taking dead insects from vehicles (*Brit. Birds* 77: 121; 91: 330; 93: 289). We have received a number of other observations of this phenomenon, which are summarised here:

On 4th August 1999, a juvenile Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* fell from the roof of a building in Plymouth, Devon, and spent a week in the car park below. One or both of the adults brought food about once a day to the youngster. After three days, another juvenile joined the first in the car park, presumably its sibling from the rooftop nest, and I noticed that they were picking dead

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In addition to those species already reported picking insects from parked vehicles, I have seen Blackbirds *Turdus merula* and two immature Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* feeding in this way in Stranraer and Newton Stewart, Dumfries

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On 31st July 1998, at Laugarbakki, northwest Iceland, I watched an adult 'White Wagtail' *Motacilla alba alba* feeding along a row of about ten cars, removing dead insects from the headlights of the vehicles. Presently, a second adult wagtail flew in and chased the first away. The second bird initially fed in the same manner as the first, but on reaching a four-wheel-drive vehicle it entered a vent below the bumper and I watched it moving about in the space behind

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During many years of commuting into and out of Waterloo Station, London, I have frequently seen Common Starlings fly out from the covered platform area to meet incoming trains. The birds have learnt to land on the front of

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insects from the bumpers and grilles of parked cars. I wondered where the gulls had learnt this behaviour, since the adult gulls were not observed feeding in this way. I have not recorded Common Starlings in this particular car park, but House Sparrows are sometimes seen feeding on insects from stationary cars.

& Galloway. On 10th July 1998, a female Blackbird dominated three House Sparrows, chasing them each time the sparrows attempted to pick insects from the front of a parked vehicle.

the radiator grille, apparently feeding on dead insects from the radiator itself.

While small insects are superabundant in good weather, a stored source of food would be invaluable in cooler conditions. Given the dust and mud of unmetalled roads, most Icelanders wash their cars frequently, which would remove most dead insects from the external bodywork, but those inside the engine bay might be expected to build up to higher densities.

slow-moving trains to eat the insects deposited there. They have presumably found that, with juicy morsels arriving regularly, if not always on time, it is worth being at the table early.

EDITORIAL COMMENT This habit of feeding on dead insects stuck to trains and motor vehicles seems to be fairly widespread and is now well documented. We shall not, therefore, publish any further individual notes on this behaviour unless they relate to particularly unusual circumstances or involve species for which such a foraging method would be totally unexpected.

Juvenile Fulmar eating Fulmar corpse

Stranded juvenile Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis*, which have not managed to reach the sea, are a common feature of the Shetland landscape in late summer. In 1998, the problem was exacerbated by prevailing easterly winds which forced many recently fledged juveniles ashore, where they could be seen sitting around on beaches.

On 3rd September 1998, at Haroldswick, Unst, several juvenile Fulmars were present, 'beached' on the shingle. One could be seen pecking at something on the beach, and as I moved closer I saw that it was actually sitting next to the corpse of another juvenile Fulmar, which I estimated had been dead for about a week. The live bird stopped pecking at the

corpse on my approach, but after a few minutes it resumed feeding. It pecked at the breast of the dead bird until it got a good hold, and then tugged with its neck, flapping its wings to gain further purchase, until a chunk of flesh was pulled free. As far as I could tell this was then swallowed immediately.

I can find no reference to cannibalism amongst Fulmars, while *BWP* suggests that both scavenging on bird corpses and feeding on land in this manner are also highly unusual. It was, however, obvious that this particular individual was under abnormal stress and this will doubtless have influenced its behaviour.

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Smyrna Kingfisher accidentally killed while catching large fish

Many cases of fish-eating birds, such as cormorants (Phalacrocoracidae), herons (Ardeidae) and mergansers *Mergus*, accidentally killed by the protective spines of fish, or suffocating or being drowned by underestimating the size of their fish prey, are reported in literature. For kingfishers (Alcedinidae), which prey on fish regularly, we are aware of only one such incident, that of a Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* which was found dead with a bullhead *Cottus gobio* wedged in its throat (*HBW*).

In November 2000, at Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur, India, we observed a Smyrna Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis* which died while trying to catch a fish. Rainfall had largely failed during the monsoon season, and the marshy areas (bunds) in the park were mostly dried up. During our visit we saw Smyrna Kingfishers almost exclusively along water canals and pools of standing water, where they hunted mainly solitarily. With prey items in grassland and other dry habitats seemingly scarce, the kingfishers appeared to depend extensively on frogs and fish. At about 07.45 hrs on 25th November, we observed a Smyrna Kingfisher perching in

Acacia trees overlooking a pool covered with large patches of floating green algae, with many fish breathing heavily on the surface. Suddenly, the kingfisher dropped down, plunging its bill deep (approximately half the length of the bill) into the dorsal side of a large fish. For 10-15 minutes the bird fought violently to lift the fish, which reacted with just sporadic strokes of its caudal fin. The kingfisher became weaker and weaker, and finally floated lifeless on the surface above the fish. We found both in the same condition when we passed by again, some three hours later.

Unfortunately, we were not able to identify the fish, but it may have been *Clarias batrachus*, an abundant species in the park. Estimating its size against the total length of the bird, we reckoned the fish to be about 40-55 cm long. Kingfishers are highly adapted to locate their prey under water, overcoming light reflection and refraction at the surface to estimate the size of the fish and its depth under water (*HBW*). In this case, the bird's ability to evaluate the size of its prey correctly was probably impeded by turbidity and the algal bloom on the water surface.

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House Martins assembling on tethered helium-filled balloon

A recent attraction at Longleat, Wiltshire, is a large, tethered, bright yellow, helium-filled balloon. Using a steel cable attached to an underground winch, the balloon is capable of carrying up to 25 passengers in a doughnut-shaped gondola slung beneath, to a height of about 150 m above the ground, from which commanding views may be obtained of the surrounding Somerset and Wiltshire countryside.

On the afternoon of 20th September 1998, we were amazed to see a flock of up to c. 300 House Martins *Delichon urbica*, constantly wheeling around and alighting upon the upper half of the balloon, despite the fact that it was swaying in the breeze and in constant use by the visiting public. At ground level, the balloon tended to attract fewest birds. As soon as it began to ascend, however, up to about 100 birds would land on the horizontal covering-mesh supports, to be carried up into the air, as if taking a lift, while others would be constantly

flying in formation in close proximity to the balloon. Once aloft, the balloon seemed to become almost magnetic in its attraction and a flock containing several hundred birds would quickly form. Occasionally, a sizeable proportion of the flock would break away to feed over the nearby woods and lakes, but the flock would re-form almost as quickly.

We initially suspected that because of its colour the balloon was attracting flying insects, but we could find very little evidence to support this idea and it appeared that it was simply being used as a site for post-breeding assembly, in which the extreme vantage afforded by the balloon was presumably an important factor. Later in the afternoon, we noticed that some nearby oak *Quercus* trees were also used for this purpose by part of the House Martin flock. Although the feeding flocks contained a few Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica*, we did not once see that species being attracted to the balloon.

Andrew Duff & Ann Lawson

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EDITORIAL COMMENT A somewhat similar observation was reported previously in *British Birds* (85: 244), and describes House Martins associating with a hot-air balloon. In the instance described here, even though the observers could see little evidence of the martins feeding near the balloon, it seems worth pointing out that yellow is an attractive colour to many flying insects.

Mud carrying by House Martins and Barn Swallows

Following Ken Spencer's letter (*Brit. Birds* 94: 603) concerning the way in which House Martins *Delichon urbica* carry mud, the following observations of Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* may be of interest. In summer 2000, I filmed a Barn Swallow's nest from egg-laying to departure. Shortly after the female began sitting she was found dead, but the male found a new partner within 48 hours. The new female ejected the old eggs from the nest, and the male also rebuilt part of the nest, the uppermost 2-3 cm of the 'parapet'. During this rebuilding, I was able to film mud collection and pellet laying. The swallow would make several jabs at the mud, and usually took a sizeable

amount, but always *inside* the bill. Any mud which adhered to the top of the bill appeared to be accidental. The mud was then pressed against the wooden rafter or against the existing part of the nest in several ways. Mostly, it seemed to be done with an open beak, with the head oscillating to and fro. It seemed that the bird was really pushing hard; perhaps the tongue and mouth were used to shape the pellet, while saliva formed the cement? At other times, the bird would be motionless for 5-10 seconds, clearly still pushing but without any head movement. On two occasions, I filmed a bird finishing a building session, then clearly wiping its bill on a white feather.

John Snape

Thwaite Barn, Thwaite Common, Erpingham, Norfolk NR11 7QG

EDITORIAL COMMENT Angela Turner has commented that 'Ken Spencer raised the question of whether House Martins collect mud on top of or inside the bill, and in response David Bryant and I suggested that hirundines usually collect mud *in* the bill but are often seen with mud *on* the bill as

well. The present note is an interesting example of a hirundine using mud collected in the bill for nest-building and suggests that mud is only accidentally carried on the bill. The observation of bill wiping is particularly interesting.

Robin attaching faecal sacs to cable

The observation of a Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* attaching faecal sacs to a cable (*Brit. Birds* 94: 545) recalled the following. In late May 2001, I watched a Robin *Erithacus rubecula* perch on a main electricity cable and purposefully place something white on the cable. Ini-

tially, I thought it was a maggot, but my binoculars revealed that it was a faecal sac. Looking more closely at the wire, I counted 12 white spots along a stretch of about 30 m. During the next few days, more sacs appeared on the cable.

Stella Woodman

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EDITORIAL COMMENT This interesting behaviour is perhaps more widespread than would appear from the literature. Consequently, we shall not publish further notes on this subject unless they contain information of a particular or additional interest.

Wheatear killing a crab

On 20th October 2001, at Keyhaven, Hampshire, I came across two Northern Wheatears *Oenanthe oenanthe* feeding along the tideline. The debris forced up by recent exceptionally high tides consisted of seaweeds (*Laminaria*, *Spartina* etc.) and the usual assortment of flotsam. Both birds fed by picking at and turning over piles of seaweed in search of prey, such as the flies (Diptera) which were emerging in the warm weather.

One of the wheatears, which still retained elements of juvenile plumage, disturbed a small crab (*Carcinus* sp.), about 20 mm in length, from the seaweed; the crab scurried across open ground towards the saltmarsh. The bird jumped back, but then advanced to peck at the crab.

M. P. Moody

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With each peck it hopped backwards and then returned to the attack immediately. The crab had stopped on open ground, and in defence raised both open claws at the attacker. The wheatear continued its attack, on one occasion catching the crab by its claw and 'bashing' it against the ground, removing a pincer. A few more pecks subdued the crab, and the wheatear pecked at the soft underparts of the now-dead crustacean; it may well have eaten part of it but I could not be sure.

BWP does not include crab as a food item of Northern Wheatear, but in view of the persistent attack, I concluded that it was a deliberate effort to secure a food item, rather than just a random surprise attack.

Male Blackbird bathing in creosote fumes

On 5th February 1998, I was creosoting a shed in my garden at West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset. While I was working, a male Blackbird *Turdus merula* flew over to perch at the edge of the shed roof, close to my creosote brush and about 30 cm above my head. The Blackbird remained for about two minutes, during which time I noticed that the bird's body

feathers were slightly raised and that, for much of the time, there was also a partial elevation of the wings; in addition, a faint subsong was uttered for a few seconds. Having flown off, it subsequently returned a little later and stayed for another minute or so before disappearing again.

Weather conditions at the time were cloudy,

mild and still. It is not unusual for birds of certain species to smoke-bathe; presumably, in this incident, the Blackbird was bathing in cre-

osote fumes and, obviously, was inhaling them too.

Dr A. P. Radford

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Persistent full song and territoriality in wintering Blackcaps

On 7th February 2000, in my garden in Leatherhead, Surrey, two male Blackcaps *Sylvia atricapilla* were heard singing. Both songs were full, with a typical scratchy start and 'pure', fluty ending, quite different from the familiar subsong heard increasingly in late winter. These two males continued to sing against each other on most mornings until 14th March, when one male disappeared; the other remained until 28th March. Each was individually recognisable by the pattern of the black cap above the bill.

Song was heard mostly between 08.00 and 09.00 hrs, except when the weather was markedly inclement. Each male established an exclusive territory, which encompassed shrubs along one side of my garden (which is 20 m wide) and parts of adjacent gardens, with song-posts in each. The boundary between the two territories fell halfway along a fence at the bottom of my garden, and this fence supported two peanut feeders, about 15 m apart. Each feeder was defended at times by the Blackcap in whose territory it lay, with interspecific aggression shown to other small birds. Only one other Blackcap was recorded in the garden that year, a female seen briefly on 15th January.

Blackcaps have wintered in Britain in increasing numbers in the last 40 years, the individuals involved having a central European origin and a northwesterly autumn migration

(Berthold 1995). Observations of foraging behaviour include many examples of both intra- and interspecific aggression, defence of individual trees or bushes (e.g. Young 1998) and numbers feeding together with mutual aggressive behaviour (e.g. Hardy 1978). Winter song has previously been documented too (e.g. Brown 1976; Young 1998). Ruttledge (1996) describes female Blackcaps as being dominant when both sexes are present, and quotes Frank King's observation of male aggression only in the absence of females. In 1996 in my garden, up to five Blackcaps (two females) were present simultaneously in February, but one male was dominant throughout February and into March and defended the feeder from Blackcaps and other species. When the dominant male left on 12th March, a female became dominant in a similar way, and remained so until last seen on 15th April. In other winters, only males have been dominant.

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Kleptoparasitism by Common Starling on a Whimbrel

Kleptoparasitism in birds is well known, although relatively few species specialise in this type of feeding. Such behaviour is not a normal feeding strategy of Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*, but kleptoparasitism on Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* has been documented (*Ökol. Vögel* 10: 113-114). On 30th July 1999, for a period of about 15 minutes during the early evening, I watched a Whimbrel *Nycticorax*

phaeopus feeding in a cut hayfield at Low Newton-by-the-Sea, Northumberland. Although there were Eurasian Curlews *N. arquata* nearby, the Whimbrel was feeding separately, and an adult Common Starling was following it closely (at a distance of 30-60 cm). Each time the Whimbrel started to probe deeply to extract a food item, the starling either flew or ran at the Whimbrel. This strategy was suc-

successful in harassing the Whimbrel to the extent that it dropped food items which the starling picked up and flew a few feet away to eat. Eventually, the Whimbrel moved away while the starling remained behind.

This was presumably an opportunistic

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strategy by this particular individual, as groups of Common Starlings were feeding normally (by probing) elsewhere in the field. It was, however, clearly effective against the Whimbrel, enabling the starling to obtain prey that may otherwise have been out of reach.

Pirate Common Chaffinches

Although a keen observer of birds in my garden, I was surprised by the following incident during May 2001. A small group of Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* were foraging on the lawn, feasting on leatherjackets, when a female Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* darted in to snatch one of these tasty morsels from the starlings. Such intrepid behaviour provoked no response from the starlings, which continued with their foraging. I

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observed this behaviour on two separate occasions within a two-week period; in both instances, about four Common Starlings and one Common Chaffinch were involved, and the chaffinch made more than one such sortie on each occasion. Whether the same individual chaffinch was involved I cannot say. The observations were made at my previous home in Brancaster, north Norfolk; the weather at the time was spring-like and sunny.

Letters

European Bee-eaters nesting in Britain

The recent nesting by a pair of European Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster* in Co. Durham prompted me to look again at *Notes on the Birds of Rutland* (Haines 1907). Haines quotes an extract from *Birds of Northamptonshire and Neighbourhood* (Lilford 1895) as follows: 'In a letter dated March 24, 1876, Mr A. C. Elliot, of Stamford, writes: "A pair of these scarce birds built a nest in the bank of a pond close to Kelthorpe (or Kiltorpe), a hamlet of Ketton, Rutland, in the summer of 1868. The nest was composed of bones, wings etc. A man in the employ of C. O. Eaton, Esq. shot one bird, which I stuffed for

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Mr Andrews, of Ketton. The young, being able to fly, got away with the mother-bird." ' Haines commented that the late Mr A. C. Elliot was a naturalist and taxidermist (in business from about 1840 to 1883) of intelligence and experience, and took it that 'he could not have been mistaken in the species of a bird so unmistakable, and one which he had actually set up for preservation'.

I have never seen this record acknowledged in print elsewhere, and it may well be that it was rejected long ago or simply overlooked. It may be of interest in the present circumstances.

EDITORIAL COMMENT The record referred to by A. M. Macfarlane was included in *The Birds of Leicestershire and Rutland* (Hickling 1978) as a 'reputed' breeding pair, but was omitted completely from *The Birds of Rutland and its Reservoirs* (Mitcham 1984). It was included under 'Omitted records' in *The Birds of Rutland – A Working List* (Harrop 1998) on the basis that there seems to be an element of doubt about some of the records from A. C. Elliot's collection at Stamford. It seems worthwhile publishing this letter at the current time, even though the record is not universally accepted. We are grateful to Andrew Harrop for his comments.

Parrots in Britain

Two recent papers in *British Birds* (Butler 2002; Butler *et al.* 2002) have dealt with parrots (Psittacidae) breeding in the wild in the UK. Discussion in both papers was limited to whether or not any Category E species would eventually develop self-sustaining populations. Since all the species concerned are quite definitely non-native, and their deliberate introduction into this country is against the law (though 'accidental' introduction has exactly the same effect), surely the discussion ought to be 'should they or should they not' rather than 'will they or will they not'.

What should be done about these parrots?

A. M. Macfarlane

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What is likely to be the long-term effect on native species, and perhaps agriculture, if they become established and spread? Will popular opinion allow them to be eliminated or shall we have to live with them as nuisances (like Canada Geese *Branta canadensis*) or pests (like Grey Squirrels *Sciurus carolinensis* and Mink *Mustela vison*)?

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The Cambridge Bird Club

The late David Lack gained his first experience of organised ornithology as an officer of the Cambridge Bird Club, and held strong views on the value of such bodies. These were organisations with an enforced turnover, where young people, confronted elsewhere with a landscape filled (like Stonehenge) with static ancient monuments dominating the scene for decades, could develop originality, enterprise and leadership, and gain a sense of responsibility and experience of organisation. While the decision of the current Cambridge Bird Club to drop its university connection and become the Cambridgeshire Bird Club (*Brit. Birds* 95: 260) may be good for local ornithology, it seems doubtful if it is so

good for the further development of the subject.

The present local organisation attributes its origin to the foundation of a local Cambridge Ornithological Society in 1925, thus repudiating its subsequent amalgamation (in 1930, when David Lack was President) with the original university Cambridge Bird Club, founded in 1905 to perpetuate the work of Alfred Newton. Surely it would be more appropriate to suspend the amalgamation and revive its original name of Cambridge Ornithological Society, instead of adopting a clumsier new one, and return the historic Cambridge Bird Club to the undergraduates before they start yet another new body of their own (if they have not done so already)?

Dr W. R. P. Bourne (Joint Secretary, Cambridge Bird Club, 1949-51)

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Colour reproduction

Martin Woodcock's letter (*Brit. Birds* 95: 400) on this subject and the need for a reliable system of colour nomenclature, reminds me of the work carried out at Dungeness Bird Observatory in the 1950s and 60s. Together with several observers familiar with birds in the hand, including Bert Axell, Harry Cawkell and Peter Grant, we tested a wide range of colour

charts (including those for various materials, paints, etc.) against bird plumages. None proved particularly successful for matching plumage shades. The one that produced the closest results, however, proved to be a philatelist's colour chart, but describing the upperparts of a bird as being a '5 cent 1946 Canada' did not seem particularly helpful!

Bob Scott

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News and comment

Compiled by Adrian Pitches

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of *British Birds*

West Nile virus detected in British birds

The West Nile virus, which has killed more than 188 people in the USA in 2002 alone, may be present in British birds, according to scientists at Oxford University. Researchers have found antibodies in non-migratory birds in the UK which suggest the presence of the virus. So far, however, there have been no cases of people contracting the disease in the UK. West Nile virus is normally transmitted by mosquitoes, which suck the blood of infected animals then feed on humans: the risk of human-to-human transmission is thought to be low. It is uncertain whether the limited mosquito population in warmer areas of the UK could support a widespread West Nile outbreak. Previous cases of the illness have occurred only in people travelling back from areas in which the disease is widespread.

The spread of the virus through bird populations in the USA has caused widespread public concern in recent years. Since its arrival in New York in 1999, 38 American states have experienced cases. Most vulnerable are people over the age of 50, or those already suffering a serious illness. The Public Health Laboratory Service, which monitors the rates of infectious disease in the UK, is already asking doctors to send them reports of any patients with encephalitis or viral meningitis, as the symptoms of both of these diseases appear similar to those of West Nile virus. The virus is endemic in equatorial Africa, where many summer migrants to Britain overwinter, including Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* and Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*.

Link: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/2367823.stm>

And vulture virus could reach Europe

RSPB researchers will be satellite-tagging Griffon Vultures *Gyps fulvus* in India next month as a mystery disease continues to wipe out many of India's vulture populations. The unprecedented numbers of Griffons now wintering in northwest India could act as carriers for the 'vulture plague' from the Indian subcontinent into the Middle East, Europe and onwards into Africa. The dramatic decline of some *Gyps* vultures in India since the mid 1990s was first blamed on poisoning but it is now widely believed that a mystery virus is responsible.

The virtual disappearance of White-rumped Vultures *G. bengalensis*, Indian Vultures *G. indicus* and Long-billed Vultures *G. tenuirostris* from much of northwest India has created a vacuum which Griffons appear to be filling. In January 2002, 850 juvenile Griffons were logged at the carcass dumps in western Rajasthan, where dead cattle are left to the vultures for disposal. By contrast, the numbers of White-rumped Vultures, formerly the commonest species, were in single figures. Where are the Griffons coming from? If they are winter visitors from the Middle East and Europe, and become infected by the vulture virus, they could spread the disease across two continents still unaffected by the pathogen. The impact of localised extinction of vulture populations, as witnessed in India, could be dramatic. Here, without this natural waste-disposal system, carcass dumps are now attracting packs of wild dogs with an attendant risk of rabies to local people. In Africa, for example, localised extinction of vultures would create a potential anthrax risk from the carcasses of rotting ruminants.

In an attempt to trace the origin of the Rajasthan Griffons, a joint RSPB-Bombay Natural History Society project, funded by the British High Commission in India, will be catching birds in January 2003 and fitting them with satellite transmitters so that they can be tracked back to their breeding grounds. RSPB's Debbie Pain told N&C: 'We don't know where all these Griffons in Rajasthan are coming from, but by satellite-tagging some of the birds we should be able to find out. We will then be in a better position to judge the potential disease threat to vulture populations in Europe and Africa.'



345. Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*, Sardinia, Italy, 1990.

What hope of Griffon appearing on the British List if the vulture virus reaches Europe?

A. Fozzi

Female vultures enjoy a jaundiced view

There's eating humble pie and there's eating *really* humble pie. A study of Egyptian Vultures *Neophron percnopterus* conducted in southern Spain suggests that male birds eat dung to attract females. Droppings of cows, goats and sheep contain a yellow pigment, a carotenoid called lutein, which birds cannot produce for themselves and which keeps the area around the eyes bright yellow.

J. J. Negro and his colleagues, of the Estacion Biologica de Doñana

in Seville, reported in *Nature* (416: 807-808) that a jaundiced aspect makes male vultures more attractive to females. The biologists found high levels of carotenoid in both cow dung and vulture skin. They tested the link by feeding four birds exclusively on cow dung for ten days. At the end of this period, all had higher lutein levels than beforehand. Mates may be impressed that the male is strong enough to withstand the risk of infection. The dung is loaded with

parasites but is also rich in protein from the eggs and larvae laid by dung beetles and flies. Researchers have found that the healthiest birds have the brightest faces. This may be an example of the 'handicap principle' of natural selection, much as the male Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* (the 'Peacock') with the biggest 'tail' is most attractive to females.

Link: *Nature* (www.nature.com/nsu/020422/020422-14.html).

Peregrines hit by the weather

Early results from this year's national Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* survey, organised by the BTO and supported by Scottish Raptor Study Groups and Scottish Natural Heritage, have revealed poor breeding success in some areas. Survey returns have highlighted low chick-survival rates in some parts; in central Scotland and western Perth and Kinross, for example, the overall number of successful nests was only half that recorded a decade ago.

The previous national Peregrine survey was carried out in 1991, when a total of 625 breeding pairs was found in Scotland (1,283 in the UK). In 2002, data for central, east and southwest Scotland indicate that, although the overall number of breeding pairs recorded was about the same, the number of successful nests (those where at least one nestling fledged) was considerably less than in 1991. Conversely, Peregrines breeding in coastal areas appear to have bred more successfully in 2002 than in 1991.

Many of the failures in 2002 are likely to have been due to severe weather in spring and early summer, but other trends reported by fieldworkers include reduced occupancy of a number of traditional breeding sites in upland areas, notably on some areas with grouse moors. There are also reports of suspected persecution, for instance in parts of southeast and northeast Scotland. These factors will be examined in more detail once all the data have been returned. Overall, a rather different picture is emerging in 2002 compared with 1991, when results indicated that Peregrines had finally recovered from the population crash in the 1960s caused by the use of organochlorine pesticides. This was heralded as a success for wildlife conservation and proof that the environmental threat posed by these chemicals had been overcome in most parts of the UK.

Patrick Stirling-Aird, of the Scottish Raptor Study Groups, said: 'While this year's poor weather, with its impact on breeding success, may have been a one-off event, there is concern about the longer-term trends in certain parts of Scotland, and of desertion of many Peregrine territories that were occupied at the time of the last national survey in 1991. There is evidence from some upland locations that Peregrine territories are unoccupied as a result of persistent criminal persecution in the supposed interests of Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus* management. In other cases, however, the underlying cause of territory desertion may be reduced numbers of prey species, something that touches on fundamental land-management practices in the uplands.'

Link: BTO (www.bto.org/news/news_2002/sep-oct/peregrinefalcons.htm).

Avocets reared from egg-collectors' haul

Following its recolonisation of England half a century ago, the Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* has now almost achieved pest status on some east-coast marshes. But in southern Spain, a former stronghold of the species, Avocets are now in decline because of habitat change and predation by Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus michalellis*. So staff at Jerez Zoo sprang into action earlier this year when the SEPRONA (Servicio de Protección de la Naturaleza, the Spanish environmental police department belonging to the Guardia Civil) confiscated 114 Avocet eggs which had been stolen from nests in the Coto Doñana national park.

The poacher is now facing a fine of up to €36,000 (about £21,600) for his actions (the eggs are a delicacy and were stolen for food, not for an egg collection). Of 92 eggs incubated at the zoo, 69 hatched. A total of 54 birds were subsequently released back into their natal area.

Essex Recorder

Essex birders should note the following new contact details for Howard Vaughan, the County Recorder: 103 Darnley Road, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 2EY; tel: 01634 325864; e-mail: howardebs@blueyond.co.uk

Half of Europe's mountain birds at risk

BirdLife marked the UN Mountain Summit in Kyrgyzstan at the end of October (the UN has designated 2002 as the International Year of Mountains) with a warning that continued over-exploitation of Europe's fragile mountain ecosystems poses a threat to the future of more than half the region's mountain-bird species. Thirty-seven of Europe's 73 mountain-bird species are threatened by over-exploitation, inappropriate farming and forestry practices, and unsustainable tourism activities carried out in mountain areas, according to Canan Orhun, head of BirdLife International's European Division. Some European birds, e.g. Black-throated Accentor *Prunella atrogularis* and Snowfinch *Montifringilla nivalis* are exclusively restricted to mountain environments. Szabolcs Nagy, European Conservation Manager, commented that many regionally threatened species in

Europe, including Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus* and Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*, face the threat of regional extinction if mountain ecosystems in the Alps and Pyrenees continue to be over-exploited for winter sports and summer tourism developments. Another species at risk is the flamboyant Caucasian Black Grouse *Tetrao mlokosiewiczi*, which is declining owing to habitat destruction and persecution in the Caucasus. There are plans to promote ecotourism in the Caucasus to help encourage local people to value the grouse. BirdLife has identified 558 Important Bird Areas in mountainous regions, with 91% of these sites subject to one or more threats from unsustainable human activities.

Links: BirdLife (www.birdlife.net/europe/mountains); International Year of Mountains (www.mountains2002.org).

The Major's home for Christmas!

As reported in N&c last month (*Brit. Birds* 95: 599), all manner of misfortunes have befallen the 'Castle Espie Six': Light-bellied Brent Geese *Branta bernicla hrota* satellite-tagged in Northern Ireland before their spring departure to the breeding grounds in Arctic Canada. Kerry ended up in an Inuit's freezer, Arnthor is also thought to have been shot in Canada, while Oscar died in Iceland, believed to have been killed by a raptor. Austin was still on Ellesmere Island on 19th September when his transponder batteries expired, and only Hugh had completed the 6,000-mile round trip home to Strangford Lough by mid October. But now Major Rutledge has joined him! Both Hugh and the Major appear to be unpaired and have no attendant goslings. But there is always next year, and another gruelling trek to the Canadian Arctic...

Link: www.wwt.org.uk/brent

Arsonists destroy BirdLife HQ at Coto Doñana

In Spain, the Ornithological Centre Madre de las Marismas del Rocío, managed by SEO/BirdLife Spain and located in El Rocío village near the border of Doñana National Park, has been burned down in a deliberate fire. The overnight fire destroyed all files, sales goods and exhibition panels in the building, which had been transferred to SEO/BirdLife by the Doñana National Park and the Almonte City Council. The Ornithological Information Centre hosted the SEO/BirdLife office as well as an interpretative exhibition on the birds and ecosystems of the Park. It was visited by more than 20,000 people every year. Doñana is one of the most important national parks in Europe, with important populations of the globally threatened Iberian Lynx *Lynx pardinus* and Spanish Imperial Eagle *Aquila adalberti*. Police are investigating the fire, which has been condemned as an outrage, while reconstruction of the centre has already begun.

New species of treecreeper

A new species, Sichuan Treecreeper *Certhia tianquanensis*, has been described from western Sichuan, China (see *J. Orn.* 143: 440-455). The Sichuan Treecreeper was originally regarded as a race of Eurasian Treecreeper *C. familiaris*, even though it is not closely related. Sichuan differs from Brown-throated Treecreeper *C. discolor* (its nearest relative) in its striking voice, short bill, underparts pattern and DNA profile. Of concern is that the species is apparently very local within a small geographical area, much of its (presumed) high-altitude coniferous-forest habitat was extensively logged in the twentieth century, and also that one of its known localities is destined for tourism development through construction of a cable railway.

Applause for Cypriot restaurant cop

Following the depressing news that Maltese hunters will be given a derogation from the EU Birds Directive and allowed to continue spring hunting of birds (*Brit. Birds* 95: 598), there is more encouraging news from another black spot for songbirds – Cyprus. Restaurateurs on the island were outraged when the island's Game Service raided their premises on 16th October and seized 5,000 pickled songbirds used in the traditional dish *ambelopoulia*. Game Service Director Pantelis Hadjiyerou, who came under fire from the restaurant trade, defended his men's actions, saying 'people don't understand that by catching these birds and selling them in restaurants they are shaming their country. We should be thanking the wardens for risking their lives day by day to uphold the law. My men receive threats to their lives on a daily basis.' If you wish to send a congratulatory e-mail to Mr Hadjiyerou, his e-mail address is: wildlife.thira@cytanet.com.cy

Link: www.cyprus-mail.com/October/19/news3.htm

Opening the floodgates

Floods Minister Elliot Morley has endorsed an RSPB scheme to breach the seawall in Lincolnshire and flood the neighbouring farmland. This novel form of flood defence, on the banks of the Wash, harnesses nature to protect 80,000 ha of low-lying, prime agricultural land and thousands of homes. Three 50-m breaches have been cut into the outer sea bank at Freiston Shore RSPB reserve, allowing saltwater to encroach gently upon 78 ha of farmland purchased by the RSPB from HMP North Sea Camp. The saltwater will encourage saltmarsh to form, a natural barrier which absorbs the force of the sea and enhances the degree of protection offered by a second, newly strengthened embankment.

The 'managed realignment' of this stretch of coast is the biggest project of its kind in the UK and is seen as a sustainable approach to rising sea levels along the south and east coasts caused by climate change and the gradual sinking of southeast England. The scheme, a partnership between DEFRA, the Environment Agency, English Nature, HMP North Sea Camp and the RSPB, has attracted EU funding of £800,000. It is also hoped that birdwatching, coupled with a newly constructed coastal cycle path, will help regenerate this bleak part of the east coast. In 1842, Freiston was a popular seaside resort with two large hotels and a daily omnibus service running from Boston. The resort was literally left high and dry when an additional seaward bank was constructed, enclosing a large expanse of saltmarsh. The majority of the banks around Freiston were built by HM Prison Service, and were commonly referred to as 'Borstal banks'.

Best Annual Bird Report 2000

The winners of this former *BB* competition, taken on by the BTO last year, have just been announced. The focus of the competition has changed slightly following the change of ownership, with less emphasis on features such as typeface and design, and more on (for example) special articles, particularly those describing or analysing local survey results. As ever, very few points separated the top reports. This year's winner was *Fife Bird Report 2000*, with a superb final score of 51 points out of a possible 53, while *Birds in Northumbria 2000* secured second place with 49 points. The Essex and Sussex reports came in at joint third, each with 48 points, with Devon, Norfolk and Shetland equal fourth (with 47 points) and Greater Manchester, Kent and Lancashire equal fifth (with 46 points).

Entries for the 2001 award should be sent to The Librarian, BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2PU, closing date 21 December 2002.

(Contributed by Jeff Baker)

Bob Scott moves on...

Regular readers will have noted that Bob Scott's name has ceased to appear as co-compiler of 'News & comment'. After almost nine years of providing material in time for the monthly deadline, Bob has taken up a new challenge at *BB*: taking over from Colin Davies as compiler of our European news reports. Bob, who joined the N&c desk in January 1994, will use his considerable experience and

knowledge of the European bird scene to good advantage, and we look forward to seeing the results of his energies in this new role shortly. Bob would be pleased to hear any thoughts and comments on the 'European Bird Report', or from potential contributors; contact him on abscott@tiscali.co.uk Meanwhile, we would like to thank him for doing the job so well and keeping people interested.

Slender-billed Curlew alive and well – in Hungary

In September 2002, in the Hortobagy region of Hungary, Pete Combridge stumbled across five Slender-billed Curlews *Numenius tenuirostris*. The birds were seen in an area of puszta (the typical steppe habitat of central Hungary), which lies mainly within a National Park, and is ideal terrain for stopover Slender-billed Curlews. The sighting is, of course, subject to ratification by the Hungarian Rarities Committee, to which the observation has already been submitted. At least until 1997, when the Slender-billed Curlew at Druridge Bay, Northumberland, was found, there was perhaps a growing feeling that this species was almost extinct, and certainly impossible to find – but the latter is clearly not the case! This latest sighting emphasises that observers throughout the Western Palearctic should be aware of, and look carefully for, Slender-billed Curlew, for we will only learn more about it and be in a position to conserve it with the help of new data. Any birders fortunate enough to find the species are urged to submit the record to the relevant national Rarities Committee and/or to the International Committee for Slender-billed Curlew formed by the Association of European Rarities Committees, at www.AERC.be

(Contributed by Didier Vangeluwe)

Adrian Pitches, clearly a glutton for punishment, has decided, for the time being at least, that he can provide enough news single-handedly to keep the feature going each month. Contributions for these pages should now be sent to Adrian on Adrian.Pitches@care4free.net

Eds

Reviews

HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF THE WORLD. VOL. 7. JACAMARS TO WOODPECKERS

Edited by Josep del Hoyo, Andrew Elliott & Jordi Sargatal.
Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, 2002. 613 pages; 70 colour plates;
317 photographs; 408 distribution maps.
ISBN 84-87334-37-7. Hardback, £110.00.

I have a little confession to make. The epic *HBW* series may have reached Volume 7 but this is the first tome I have clapped eyes on. Eyes are not enough. I clamped two arms around it and arched my back to relieve the postman of the heaviest single item that he has ever delivered to my house. Although I was immediately captivated by the content, artwork, retina-piercingly sharp photographs and glittering layout, my wife saw it in a different context: 'Take that thing off the kitchen table – the kids need room to eat their breakfast.' So it is big. Five other words sum it up better – colossal, lavish, definitive, meaty, beautiful. Volume 7 is a thudding portmanteau which devotes over 500 pages to just six species groups. These are all the planet's jacamars (Galbulidae), puffbirds (Bucconidae), barbets (Capitonidae), toucans (Ramphastidae), honeyguides (Indicatoridae) and woodpeckers (Picidae). Not, you might have guessed, the stuff that a parochial Irish reviewer would have a lot of familiarity with. In truth, I have seen virtually none of the birds in the book, but I enjoyed the wonderfully lucid text about them all, which grabbed and held my attention throughout, especially when Woody Woodpecker was mentioned on page 392.

I found browsing the book exhilarating. It was like driving a fast car with lots of oomph under the bonnet. The depth of good, jargon-free coverage was amazing. I could immerse myself in species after species and discover pretty much the A to Z of everything that is known about each. I guess, like most readers, I was more keen to read about the likes of Black

Woodpeckers *Dryocopus martius* rather than Black-girdled Barbets *Capito dayi* but, no matter how obscure the species, I finished up drawn to the worrying 'Status and Conservation' paragraph at the end of every account. Sometimes this made depressing reading. You cross your fingers and hope that quality books such as this will serve as a wake-up call to decision-makers in smoke-filled rooms scattered across foreign (and domestic) lands.

As a reminder of what has been lost, Volume 7 contains a quite brilliant 53 pages devoted, as a foreword by Errol Fuller, to extinct birds, each illustrated in splendid new paintings in glorious 'living' colour. Like a moth to a flame, I was dazzled by the case histories and read the whole lot in one sitting. Tales of extinction exert a strange pull. The fact that a species is gone for ever is a horrific concept, yet this makes permanent loss doubly fascinating. I suppose, in a morbid sort of way, that this section of the book was one of my favourites and several accounts read like 'whodunnits'. The best saga involves Stephens Wren *Xenicus lyalli* – but read the book to find out what happened.

Lynx, the Barcelona-based publishers, have bravely conducted a readership poll to test customer satisfaction with *HBW* so far. Not surprisingly, responses have been very favourable, but Lynx are still listening for feedback. Well, here is mine. Please add English names to the photograph captions. My knowledge of Latin isn't that bad, but while I can handle *Jynx torquilla*, I go to pieces over *Stactolaema olivacea woodwardi*. Naturally, Latin names appear in italics

but they are also enclosed in brackets – why? The key for each plate contains only a partial list of the birds depicted. Those species written about on the page directly opposite the plate are not included in the plate's key. I found this not so much confusing as simply annoying. I want to look at a key and see every bird in its accompanying plate listed there. And another thing, when you look up a species in the index, say Ivory-billed Woodpecker *Campephilus principalis*, you are directed to the species account and other text mentions for that species. The index does not list photographs of the same species found elsewhere in the book. Hence, I was initially bitterly disappointed not to see any photographs of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers (since I knew good photographs existed) until I stumbled upon them on page 418! This 'problem' affects numerous species.

What about the paintings? In the main, absolutely great. The artists' styles are different but the best are really good. Some plates are fiddly, for example small look-alike woodpeckers positioned on the page in identical poses resembling a company of tin soldiers. Other plates, also featuring woodpeckers, are a joy. My personal favourite was plate 48 with Buff-rumped Woodpecker *Meiglyptes tristis* looking stunning – and it is common in its range across south-east Asia (where it occurs in the wintering range of Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*, so watch out Flamborough Head!).

When I finally shut the last page I felt a warm glow of satisfaction – as even I could have done a better job on the back-cover artwork. One final word of warning: if ordering a copy for Christmas, be sure to check your chimney's diameter first – Santa might have a job getting this one down the hole!

Anthony McGeehan

**GUARDIAN SPIRIT
OF THE EAST BANK:
A CELEBRATION OF THE
LIFE OF R. A. RICHARDSON**

By Moss Taylor. Wren
Publishing, Norfolk, 2002.
232 pages; 67 colour plates;
44 photographs; many line
illustrations.
ISBN 0-9542545-0-3.
Hardback, £35.00.

So what was the magic? What was it that generated such admiration and affection for Richard Richardson that we have cause to celebrate his life 25 years after he died? After all, hardly any birder born after about 1965 could have known him, but they will after leafing through Moss Taylor's beautiful book. They will find the answers to these questions and much more besides.

Richard Richardson was, quite simply, devoted to birds, but he had a great deal more than that going for him. Friendly and generous with his time and knowledge, his courtesy and patience were quali-

ties which, sadly, seem somehow less evident in the modern world. His somewhat raffish appearance, with jeans and motorbike, had great appeal, but he actually led a somewhat frugal life, and was quite a private person. Even Liz Forster, his friend of many years, could write in his obituary in *The Times* that some of his early years were spent in an orphanage, which was far from the truth. But apart from his friendliness and modesty – he could not stand pomposity or know-alls – it was his fieldcraft and innate artistic abilities which captured people's attention. His aptitude for drawing, even in his early years, was awesome: not just birds, but cartoons, people and places. Blessed with exceptionally keen eyesight and hearing, he developed a photographic memory sharper than anyone I have ever known.

The many examples of his work which adorn the book are not only beautiful to look at, but instructive in their simplicity, delicacy and accuracy. Undoubtedly, his drawings of birds derived great authority from his experience in

keeping cagebirds, and in handling and ringing wild birds, as is evidenced in his lovely paintings in Richard Fitter's two Collins guides. Moss Taylor's thorough research gives the book an enduring value in terms of the historical documentation of an important era in British ornithology. It is brought vividly to life with excerpts from Richard's beautifully written diaries. There are extensive extracts from these, ranging from early and quite eloquent prose to detailed accounts of the behaviour of nesting Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* on Cley marsh.

Richard Richardson's name is, of course, perpetuated in one of the awards in the Bird Illustrator of the Year competition sponsored by this journal. I can think of nothing better than for some worthy benefactor to buy up 100 copies of this book, so that each winner of the award for the next century could have one. What a wonderful stimulus that would be! Get yourself a copy while you can.

Martin Woodcock

BIRDS OF SOUTH KOREA

By Charlie Moores, Nial
Moores and Kim Su Kyung.
Charlie Moores Video
Productions, 2002. Video;
running time 3 hours; over
170 species covered. £19.95.

All profits from this video will go to conservation projects in South Korea, which, considering that many important wetlands in the country meet RAMSAR site standards yet have no legal protection, has to be a good thing! The video serves to promote the country as a birding destination, but also bird conservation in South Korea and the work of Wetlands and Birds Korea. The overall film quality and production are excellent, although the sound balance between the narration and natural sound is not always in sync. The narration itself is smooth and informative,

however, and, along with the captions, gives valuable information about the conservation status of the species concerned.

After a brief introduction covering culture and travel in South Korea, and a section on commoner birds, the video follows the birding seasons. The spring and autumn sections focus on waders and migration hotspots, but the greatest part concerns winter birding in Korea, including the wealth of wildfowl, together with wintering cranes *Grus* and raptors. Around 175 species are featured, among them some real belters, including amazing swirling flocks of Baikal Teal *Anas formosa* and rare footage of Scaly-sided Merganser *Mergus squamatus*, Nordmann's Green-shank *Tringa guttifer* and Spoonbill Sandpiper *Emrynorhynchus pygmaeus*, Relict *Larus relictus* and Saunders's Gulls *L. saundersi*, and Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia caliope* and Siberian Accentor

Prunella montanella (two personal highlights of a mouth-watering suite of gripping 'Sibes'). Of special interest to students of identification and taxonomy will be the discussion of, and identification tips for, the east Asian 'large white-headed gull' complex, Japanese Skylarks *Alauda (arvensis) japonica* and the 'White Wagtail' *Motacilla alba alba* complex, whilst there is also an excellent comparison (including calls) of eastern Reed Buntings *Emberiza schoeniclus* and Pallas's Reed Bunting *E. pallasi*.

This video brought back some excellent memories of South Korea and offers an excellent insight to the birds of this little-known country. Being split into sections, there is a fair amount of repetition of certain species, albeit at different seasons, but we do not normally complain at getting too much for our money!

Pete Morris

**NATURE CONSERVATION:
A REVIEW OF THE
CONSERVATION OF
WILDLIFE IN BRITAIN
1950-2001**

By Peter Marren.

New Naturalist series, No. 91,
Harper Collins, London, 2002.

344 pages; 16 colour plates;
over 130 black-and-white
illustrations.

Hardback ISBN 0-00-711305-6,
£39.99; paperback ISBN 0-00-
711306-4, £19.99.

This book should be compulsory reading for all those interested in the future of wildlife in these islands. It updates the volume in the same series by the late Sir Dudley Stamp, published in 1969. The author pulls no punches. He resigned from English Nature following the break-up of the Nature Conservancy Council, unable to stand the combination of internal regimentation and external timidity. He points out how vested interests, both private and governmental, have attempted to take

over the direction of conservation. 'Natural history... seems to hold little appeal today. People have become content to be spoon-fed by the media.' The author suggests that naturalists should put the conservation industry aside and rediscover the 'enquiring spirit of the old naturalists', and resist seeing wild organisms as 'targets'. There is more to nature than nature conservation.

David Warden

AVES DEL ARCHIPELAGO CANARIO

By Aurelio Martín & Juan Antonio Lorenzo.
Francisco Lemus, La Laguna, 2001. 787 pages;
many colour photographs; maps and tables.
ISBN 84-87973-15-9. Hardback, £32.75.

The majority of this volume is concerned with all the species which have been reported from the Canary Islands, from the early times of Berthelot and Webb to the present day, dealing with all records known to the authors (whether the Spanish Rare Birds Committee has assessed them or not). All published records are included, but while this makes for thorough coverage of the accidentals, there are some species which would perhaps have been better placed in square brackets, since their occurrence within the islands

is little short of incredible. The species breeding within the islands receive ample coverage, with paragraphs dealing with subspecies, distribution and status, breeding, movements and diet. The extensive bibliography runs to 67 pages and there are six appendices dealing with the distribution of breeding species, doubtful species, escapes from captivity, data from ringed birds, interesting areas to observe birds and the legal status of breeding species.

The introductory chapters are of equal interest and include infor-

mation on the geography of the archipelago, the history of ornithology within the islands, habitats, birds of the past and the current situation regarding conservation.

I found this to be a very informative book and the most authoritative work on the islands' birds since Bannerman's *Birds of the Atlantic Islands* in the 1960s, and anyone with an interest in the avifauna of the Canary Islands will want to buy it. All profits will be directed to the conservation of rare and endangered species within the archipelago, another good reason to purchase this new title. The only major criticism is that it was not produced in English, something which would have made it available to a much greater audience.

Tony Clarke

**BIRDS IN COUNTIES. AN ORNITHOLOGICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY
FOR THE COUNTIES OF ENGLAND, WALES, SCOTLAND AND
THE ISLE OF MAN. FIRST SUPPLEMENT. ERRATA,
CORRIGENDA ET ADDENDA, INCLUDING A NEW SECTION ON
THE CHANNEL ISLANDS.**

By David K. Ballance. Isabelline Books, Falmouth. 2002. 90 pages;
one map. ISBN 0-9542955-0-1. Paperback, £16.95 (+ £1.50 postage).

This first supplement updates (to the year 2000), augments and corrects the reference work of which I

wrote 'This book should certainly be in every serious ornithological library and on every serious British

ornithologist's bookshelves' (*Brit. Birds* 93: 460). Everyone who owns and uses the original work will want to own this supplement, but the high price is likely to restrict sales to libraries and just a few private individuals. The author plans to compile a second supplement for publication in about 2005.

J. T. R. Sharrock



Monthly Marathon

Our very first glance at the passerine in photo number 191 (reproduced here as plate 346) might suggest some sort of flycatcher (Muscicapidae), perched on an exposed branch and with longish, slightly drooped wings. As we all know, however, birds captured on film away from their usual setting can look very odd indeed. Whatever it is, it is certainly very plain, with fairly uniform pale underparts and brownish-grey upperparts, lacking any obvious markings. There is a hint of a dark loreal area, which also seems to extend behind the eye, and there seems to be a weak, pale supercilium. A closer look at the underparts reveals a pale buffish wash over the flanks and belly, while the throat is whiter. But that is about it, and I think we should give up on plumage at this point and consider the structure of the bird instead.

It is a very sleek, long-bodied individual, with relatively long wings and (we imagine) tail. The head is turned slightly towards us

and we can see that the bill is quite substantial. If we try to animate the picture in our mind's eye and turn the head away from us, it seems a reasonable assumption that the bill would be fairly long. Certainly nothing about it makes it look short.

The bird also seems to have a flattish, sloping forehead, while the other feature which we can see quite clearly is that it has very long undertail-coverts, extending beyond the branch it is perching on. The legs are greyish and quite thick, indicating that this is not a small bird.

This lack of any obvious marks leads us to consider a warbler (Sylviidae). The long undertail-



Olaf Lessow

346. Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*, Austria, June 2000.

coverts rule out the generally dainty *Phylloscopus* warblers, as does the general coloration and the heavy bill. In fact, these features should take us straight to one of two possible genera: *Acrocephalus* or *Hippolais*. The bill of most *Hippolais* warblers is strikingly broad-based but sharply pointed, while the lower mandible is often a pale yellowish colour. The bill of our mystery bird is more bullet-like and recalls a thrush *Turdus* more than a warbler. In addition, the base is not really particularly broad, and there does not appear to be any obvious or extensive pale colour on the lower mandible.

With the facts so far not really fitting a 'Hippo', we are left with an *Acrocephalus* warbler, and a large one at that, as suggested by those thick, hefty legs. In fact, the choice really comes down to just those two 'bruisers' of the genus: Great Reed *A. arundinaceus* or Clamorous Reed Warbler *A. scuttorcus*. The latter has considerably shorter, more rounded wings (manifest in a noticeably shorter primary projection at rest) and a somewhat longer and, especially, narrower bill than our mystery bird. The long wings and the bill shape of our bird lead us unequivocally to Great Reed Warbler, and this individual was photographed by Olaf Lessow in Austria, in June 2000.

Steve Rooke



347. 'Monthly Marathon'. Photo no. 194. Tenth stage in twelfth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules (see page 36), then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, c/o The Banks, Mountfield, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JY, or by e-mail to editor@britishbirds.co.uk, to arrive by 31st January 2003.

Monthly Marathon

Just under half (46%) of this month's entrants got the solution right, including Jon Holt, who remains one step ahead of the chasing pack with a sequence of three-in-a-row. Among a wide

range of alternative answers were several members of the genus *Hippolais* but there were no votes for Clamorous Reed Warbler.

Eds

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Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary of unchecked reports covers mid October to mid November 2002.

Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris* Torness (Lothian), 13th October. **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* Drift Reservoir (Cornwall), 14th-27th October.

Killdeer Plover *Charadrius vociferus* St Agnes (Scilly), 4th-8th November. **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* Barassie/Troon (Ayrshire), 26th-30th October; Kinneil (Lothian), 26th October; Benbecula (Western Isles), 27th October; Ballycotton (Co. Cork), 28th October; Haddenham (Cambridgeshire), 28th October to 4th November; Bannow Bay (Co. Wexford), 31st October. **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* South Uist (Western Isles), 13th October to 3rd November. **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* Rogerstown (Co. Dublin), 17th October; Mullet Peninsula (Co. Mayo), 10th November. **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* Lough Donnell (Co. Clare), 15th October; Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), 19th October. **Stilt Sandpiper** *Micropalama himantopus* Unst (Shetland), 5th-7th November. **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* St Agnes, 6th November. **Long-billed Dowitcher**

Limnodromus scolopaceus Clonakilty (Co. Cork), 19th October; Lough Beg (Co. Derry), 28th October to 7th November; Saltfleet Haven (Lincolnshire), 2nd-7th November; long-stayer still at Penclacwydd (Carmarthenshire), to 6th November. **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* Sandbach (Cheshire), 17th October; Amwell Gravel-pits (Hertfordshire), 18th-28th October; Tacumshin, 19th October; Cantley Beet Factory (Norfolk), 8th November. **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* Gugh and St Agnes (Scilly), 11th-23rd October.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* Stanford Reservoir (Northamptonshire/Leicestershire), 3rd-5th November; presumed same, Draycote Water



Jim Pattinson

348. Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* Whitburn, Co. Durham, September 2002.

Recent reports

Steve Young/Birdwatch



349. Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 2002.

Simon Surrup



350. Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi*, Fair Isle, Shetland, September 2002.

Simon Surrup



351. Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*, St Martin's, Scilly, October 2002.

(Warwickshire), 6th November. **Elegant Tern** *Sterna elegans* Dingle (Co. Kerry), 21st October to 1st November. **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* Blennerville (Co. Kerry), 17th October. **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* Cantley Beet Factory, 19th October to 5th November.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* St Agnes, 22nd October, then St Mary's (Scilly), 22nd October to 7th November; Fishguard (Pembrokeshire), 22nd October; two, Hunstanton (Norfolk), 24th October. **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* Fair Isle (Shetland), 11th-14th October; Out Skerries (Shetland), 12th-17th October; Bressay (Shetland), 16th October; Unst, 16th October; St Mary's, 20th October; Skomer (Pembrokeshire), 22nd-23rd October. **Pechora Pipit** *Anthus gustavi* Fair Isle, 11th October. **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* Flamborough Head (East Yorkshire), 11th October; Spurn (East Yorkshire), 12th October; Dawlish Warren (Devon), 14th October;

Bardsey (Gwynedd), 17th-18th October; Treco (Scilly), 18th-19th and 23rd October; Unst, 21st October; St Mary's, 22nd October. **Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* Bardsey, 16th October. **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 13th-19th October. **Grey-cheeked Thrush** *Catharus minimus* St Agnes, 28th-30th October. **Dark-throated Thrush** *Turdus ruficollis*, Nanjizal (Cornwall), 15th October; Fleck (Shetland), 17th October; St Mary's, 19th October; Porthgwarra (Cornwall), 20th October; Treco, 21st-24th October; St Nicholas-at-Wade (Kent), 24th October (all records were of 'Black-throated Thrush' *T. r. atrogularis*).

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* Unst, 14th-15th October. **Lanceolated Warbler** *Locustella lanceolata* Fair Isle, 10th October and 19th October. **Paddy-field Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* Gugh, 1st-6th November. **Blyth's Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum* Filey (North Yorkshire), 12th-16th October; St Mary's Island (Northumberland), 13th-14th

Recent reports

October; Bressay (Shetland), 16th October; Unst, 16th October; St Mary's, 30th October to 8th November. **Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis* Cot Valley (Cornwall), 16th-18th October. **Pallas's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus proregulus* A total of 28 were reported, mostly along the east coast of England (including three in both Kent and Norfolk, and five in East Yorkshire), with the main arrival periods being 12th-13th and 16th-17th October. **Radde's Warbler** *Phylloscopus schwarzi* Wells Woods



Hugh Harrop

352. Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*, Lerwick, Shetland, October 2002.



Chris Batty

353. Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus*, St Agnes, Scilly, October 2002.



Steve Young/Birdwatch

354. Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 2002.

(Norfolk), 9th-14th October; St Mary's, 1st November. **Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* Thorpeness (Suffolk), 10th October, with another on 1st-3rd November; Sumburgh Head (Shetland), 14th October; St Mary's, 6th-7th November. **Western Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli* Nanquidno (Cornwall), 10th-14th October; Newbiggin (Northumberland), 13th-14th October; Land's End (Cornwall), 26th October to 1st November.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* Two, Dungeness (Kent), 23rd October. **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* St Mary's, 18th-22nd October. **Spanish Sparrow** *Passer hispaniolensis* Flamborough Head, 30th October. **European Serin** *Serinus serinus* Two, Tresco, 19th October, presumed same St Mary's, 20th October to 1st November; Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), 27th October to 1st November; Portland (Dorset), 1st-3rd November. **Arctic Redpoll** *Carduelis hornemanni* Two, Unst, 18th October; Fair Isle, 19th

October. **White-throated Sparrow** *Zonotrichia albicollis* Flamborough Head, 22nd-29th October. **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* Cape Clear Island, 22nd October. **Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* Hengistbury Head (Dorset), 1st-8th November.



Hugh Harrop

355. Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*, Fair Isle, Shetland, October 2002.



Jim Pattinson

356. Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*, Holy Island, Northumberland, September 2002.



Rebecca Nason

357. Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*, St Martin's, Scilly, October 2002.



Steve Young/Birdwatch

358. Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 2002.



Gary Bellingham

359. White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*, Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, October 2002.

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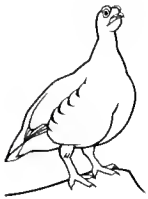
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- (4) a few subject headings, e.g. 'Announcements', 'Breeding', 'Conservation research news', 'Field characters', 'Food and feeding behaviour', 'News and comment', 'Rarities Committee', 'Recent reports', 'Roosting', and 'Voice';
- (5) 'Reviews', which are listed together in alphabetical order of authors reviewed.

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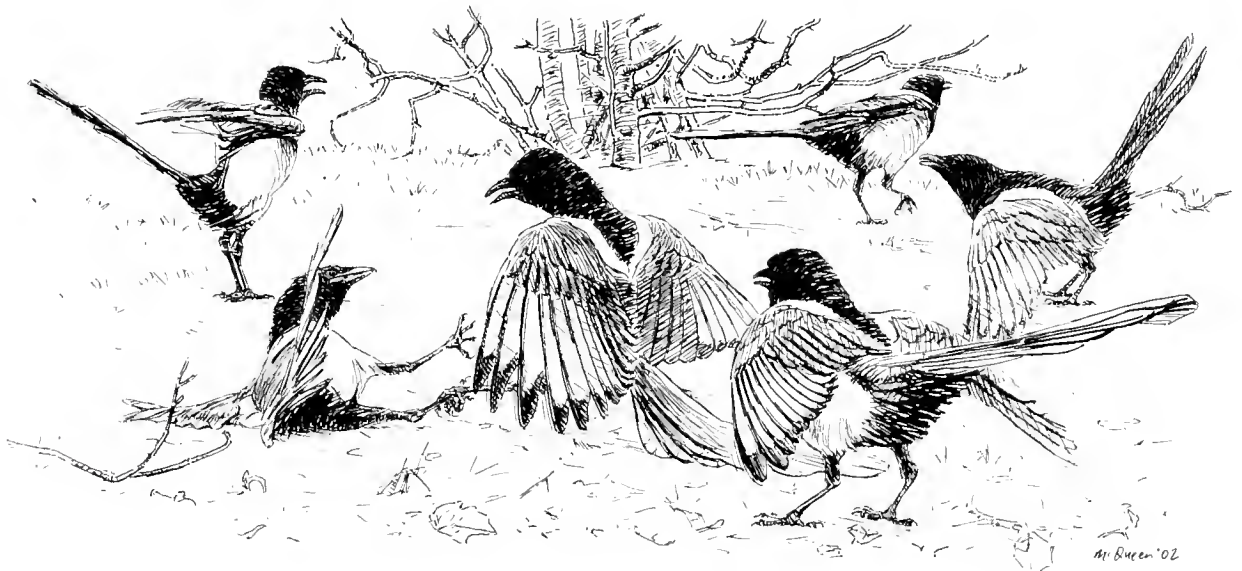
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